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ELEMENTARY CHRISTIANITY

BY

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WITH A FOREWORD BY
THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON

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PREFACE

To my People in London,

This is the first time that I have written a preface to the Lenten Book without being able to read it, but I have an absolute confidence in my friend, the Headmaster of Eton, that he will write a book which will be useful and helpful to us all.

I shall be thinking of you all, as I go on my long journey, and, during Lent, I shall be doing my best to bring a message of good cheer to our brethren in Australia and New Zealand. I hope to spend Holy Week with two men, well-known in London, the Bishop of Colombo (Mark Carpenter-Garnier) and the Archdeacon, Vernon Smith.

I need not say that I shall be with you in spirit during Lent and Holy Week, and I send you all my blessing.

A. F. LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

(*a*) *The purpose of the book.*

THE purpose of this little book is suggested in its title: it professes to be nothing more than a handbook for beginners, but Christianity is so vast a subject that in it no one need be ashamed to call himself a beginner. It is designed also for that large class who would not even claim that title; who regard Christianity with respect but with perplexity, uncertain both what its claims are and on what foundation they rest. There has perhaps never been a time in the history of this country when what may be called "a Christian spirit" was more widely diffused, but there has certainly never been a time when Christian belief was more generally or more acutely questioned.

One reason for this paradoxical state of affairs seems to lie in the fact that most of the defence of Christianity is carried on at an intellectual altitude unapproachable by the average man. He can hardly be expected to read the exhaustive works of philosophers, nor the elaborate treatises of scholars, and the result is that he is left with a hazy belief that everything is going wrong, that Christianity has ceased to be rationally defensible and that the average parson is either culpably ignorant, or capable of intellectual gymnastics which approach the dishonest. It certainly would not be true to say that the gulf between clergy and laity is wider than it has ever been: it was incalculably wider a hundred years ago (except in so far

as the clergy were essentially lay) : but it is wide enough to be really painful to any right thinking person, and the blame does not rest exclusively with either party. The layman is shy of asking questions which he fears may prove offensive : the cleric is preoccupied with practical affairs (for he has more to do and does it more conscientiously than he ever did before) and apt to seek for intellectual peace by concentrating on hard work : or if he is a thinker he so rapidly becomes something of an expert that he finds it difficult to remember how little others know. And neither party, being English, is full of intellectual curiosity.

The result is that the layman is left with no answer to the questions he would like to ask, and carries his crude conceptions of religion to the grave : seriously perturbed often by difficulties which never existed, and hampered by an idea of official Christianity which its defenders would never recognise as their own.

The title "elementary Christianity" is intended to suggest a starting-point and not a conclusion. No one who accepted the views here set forth could be content without going further, and two people who started from these premisses might well arrive at wholly different conclusions as to the ordering of their religious life.

But it must never be forgotten that the religious exercises in which we take part are not an end in themselves but essentially a preparation for life. Even those who feel themselves admitted into the very presence of God are granted that privilege, not that they may rest idly in the confidence of His strength, but that they may be the better able to do His work in the world. We return from the august ceremonies of the Mass, as from the austere silences of a Quaker meeting, with the command ringing in our ears : "See that thou make all things

according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." Even those who shrink not only from all ceremonies but from all association with others in their worship know that their own lives must test the reality of their communion with God. The soldier learns discipline on the barrack square that he may not forget it in the presence of the enemy, and though we may be allowed to choose the method of our training we can never be allowed to forget that our warfare is one. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers"—against those powers of evil which exercise so mysterious a dominion over the human thought and will—"against the world rulers of this darkness"—the forces which urge us to deny a spiritual interpretation of life and to reject the light given us for a guide—"against the spiritual wickedness in high places", which refuses to accept Christ as a true guide for the life of man. In this great conflict those who accept the conclusions which this book suggests will be found, with whatever difference of equipment, and with whatever minor loyalties to observe, fighting on the same side.

(*b*) *The chief difficulties to be met*

The main difficulty which hampers an apologist for Christianity lies in the enormous extent of the area which he is expected to cover. A Christian preacher is no longer justified in making any assumptions as to the presuppositions of the congregation which he is addressing. He is speaking to people who have no solid background either of faith or knowledge, whose reasons for doubt vary almost infinitely. There are some whose doubts are based on scientific grounds: some whose doubts are based on historical or literary criticism: more

whose doubts are traceable to what may be vaguely called the spirit of the age ; and within these classes there are infinite subdivisions. Scientific knowledge, for instance, takes at least a generation before its results begin to operate in the mind of the ordinary man, and there are many who are now disturbed by views which a later science has discarded as obsolete or inadequate.

A parallel may be suggested from the experience of the Great War. The one fundamental question was, of course, the essential rightness of our cause, but below that question were countless others, varying with the individual concerned, and often demanding more of his immediate attention. The politician was concerned with the right conduct of diplomacy : the Navy was racked with problems as to the right method of applying its strength : the High Command was preoccupied with the conflict of Eastern and Western strategy, and every subordinate in every military department was faced with absorbing problems of his own. Again, the economic aspect of the struggle was as absorbing and as important as the military, and from Lancashire to Calcutta problems of wages and hours of work took the first place in countless minds. The arguments which appealed to any one of these classes would have seemed trifling or meaningless to many of the others.

But in the case suggested there was at least an apparent unity of purpose and a general agreement that the cause was good. A modern writer in defence of Christianity has to begin further back still, and has to face a widespread feeling that he is an obscurantist defending the indefensible, tolerated, perhaps, because he is not as a rule regarded as inspired by selfish motives, but suspected of being the not unwilling victim of personal or professional prejudice. He is, and he appears to be, swimming against the stream.

To those who believe Christianity to be the one hope for the individual or for the world it is infuriating to be compelled to spend so much time in arguing on points which seem to them trifling. In a sense indeed, they have no right to complain. They claim to possess the Truth and the claim involves a readiness to co-ordinate all other truth with it. Again, the official exponents of Christianity have only themselves to blame for much misunderstanding : they have concentrated on what is non-essential and cannot escape the penalty of their own mistakes. Carlyle's attack on " Jewish Old Clothes " and his demand for an " Exodus from Houndsditch " were exaggerated and violent, but they represent a justifiable feeling ; similarly no Christian need be ashamed to declare, in the words of a modern Bishop, that, in some respects at least, the traditions of the early church are the traditions of the nursery.

On the other hand, they have a right to demand that their opponents should concentrate on the main question, should make some attempt to realise what Christianity really is, and should cease to taunt them with holding positions which all intelligent Christians have long since abandoned. We have, it is to be hoped, outlived the age in which the abandonment of an untenable view is held to be a reproach : the process may be painful, and will be expensive in proportion to the vigour with which it was previously held, but no man of science, at any rate, will quarrel with a religion which is ready to learn and to confess that it is learning. Nor is it easy to understand why the Church has been so ready to forget its Founder's express declaration : " I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now ". The seventeenth-century nonconformist who ventured to say " I am verily persuaded the Lord has yet

more truth to break forth out of His holy word" was driven from England by episcopal persecution: while we deplore the fact, let us at least be thankful that his doctrine would be orthodox to-day.

The study of the history of the Church is in itself profoundly depressing, and I have never understood why there should be the least delicacy in admitting it. To claim that it shows evidence of continuous Divine guidance seems to me perilously near blasphemy. Boccaccio's Jew, it will be remembered, said that it was the sight of the iniquities of Rome which finally convinced him that a church which could survive them must be in origin divine. There is a very real sense in which this is true, for despite all the follies and iniquities with which its history is marked no student of history can doubt that it has been the main force for good in Europe throughout the last twenty centuries, nor, so far as this country is concerned, is there any reason for denying that it is nearer to the spirit of its Founder to-day than it has ever been before. In this, as in other branches of history, it is true that the pessimist is the man who knows a little and the optimist the man who knows more: but this is no reason for ignoring, or attempting in the name of religion to justify, the many gross blunders and failures of the past.

If we may return for a moment to our military simile, the position of the ordinary unofficial member of the Church of England is not unlike that of an officer holding an advanced position in the trenches. He has not himself selected the position he has to defend, and doubts occasionally occur to him whether the High Command is infallible in its decisions. He is uncertain as to the support on which he can count in case of an attack, and has a shrewd suspicion that the forces opposing him are

greater than official optimism will allow. He can hear the great guns—the last word of modern science—booming at intervals in the distance, and has no means of knowing when they may be concentrated, with perhaps disastrous effect, on his particular sector. He feels that he and those for whom he is responsible may be in danger of being sacrificed to "political" considerations, and like all good soldiers he has an inveterate distrust of politicians. The Generals are all right: not very clever perhaps, but, anyhow, honest, if only the politicians would leave them alone! The soldier frankly dislikes and distrusts the particular bit of work he has been given to do: there is nothing for it but to set his teeth and remember that after all the cause *is* a good one—capable of being criticised, no doubt, but still undeniably good—and that the only thing for him to do is to see the thing through.

The parallel is too obvious to need developing in detail. The ordinary thinking Christian suffers from a very similar ignorance and it results in a very similar distrust. He does not distrust the bishops who are his official leaders: he knows many of them to be honest and hardworking men, but he feels that they are obscurely swayed by considerations of ecclesiastical policy which make no appeal to the plain man. He may not know the saying of the great Lord Halifax: "In Parliaments men wrangle on behalf of liberty that do as little care for it as they deserve it," but if he does he will be tempted to apply it to discussions of Religion in ecclesiastical assemblies. The one thing which keeps him steadfast is his conviction that his cause is good, and that in spite of all blunders and treacheries and follies it must at length prevail. He is not greatly interested in points of detail: he seldom, for instance, feels any real enthusiasm for the Church of England as such: the main thing, he might

say, is to win the war, not to consider what each particular ally will get out of the peace. But he does believe that he is face to face with a real enemy and is defending a real principle. "Prussian militarism" was a real thing, though all Prussians were not militarists and Bavarians were demonstrably not Prussians. Similarly "the Christian religion" is a thing worth fighting for, though desperately hard to define, and its enemies, though individually respectable and even attractive, *are* enemies and must be faced as such.

But though the conviction is bred in his bones, and is ultimately, perhaps, independent of argument, he would be glad, like his military friend, to be reminded now and then of what exactly he is fighting for, and to know the answer to some of the criticisms he hears. "We aren't really fighting to smash Germany or to seize her colonies: it isn't really a 'capitalist' war, as some idiots keep on saying?" Most wars certainly have been selfish, but surely this is all right, even though some of the methods employed seem to his judgment a little questionable. So the soldier ponders, and so the average Christian listens to the doubts which arise, whether the history of religion is not so stained with follies and crimes that it is doubtful whether it can command an honest man's allegiance. The alternative seems so delightfully clear-cut (like Prussian militarism), and what is clear-cut and definite has a terrible attraction even, or especially, for the intelligent. (Did not the philosophers of Athens find a horrible attraction in the simplicity of Spartan discipline?) Is it not possible, after all, that the enemy may be right, and that Science not Religion holds the keys of wisdom?

And then, in the midst of all these doubts and difficulties, there rises again in the soldier's mind a feeling which is beyond all argument. He knows or guesses all

that there is to be said against his country : he knows its motives to be mixed at times and its history not blameless : but he knows that it stands, as it has stood for centuries, as the champion of freedom, and that it has gone further than any nation which he knows in the effort to make freedom a reality. Very well, then : after all, a man must make up his mind sometime, and, if one has to face death, England is a good country to die for, as it is a good country in which to live. And as he settles down to his job once more there pass through his mind visions of England—its green fields, its trees, its rivers and its country lanes—oh yes, a country worth dying for !

The Christian's vision is at least as clear. He knows that most of what is good in the world he sees has, as a matter of history, had its origin in Galilee. He knows that the thought of Christ and of what He stood for has inspired countless better men than he ; has changed the face of the world and is changing it still. He knows that the chequered history of Christianity is the history of man's failure to accept Christ's teaching, and he dares to dream of a day when this failure will be made good. He sees a vision of a world in which Christ will be acknowledged as King and in the strength of that vision, when the question comes

> It may be false, but will you wish it true ?
> Has it your vote to be so if it can ?

He cries in answer, Yes, it is true, and here, by the grace of God, is my life to prove it ! Or in humbler words, Lord, I believe : help thou mine unbelief !

There is but one thing to add before we leave this long-drawn military simile. The one thing which you must not say to a soldier is that the war is over. That cry is all very well for civilians in Whitehall, for politicians safe in their studies, or for profiteers at ease at home.

They may see victory coming and forget that many good men's lives will have yet to be given as the price. The soldier knows better : he can tell you that the war is not yet over and that the struggle is still very real. No cry could be more untrue nor more paralysing in its effect, for who will risk his life when the need for self-sacrifice is over ?

Similarly there can be no assumption more false or more paralysing than that the Christian cause is won. We are not fighting for a platitude but for a paradox. The eighteenth century tried to prove that the teachings of Christ were consistent with common sense : that noble work, Law's *Serious Call*, for instance, is based on the assumption that to follow Him is the only course for a sensible man. It would be far truer to maintain that Christ's sayings, like those of the greatest poets, are, very literally, un-common non-sense, and His followers are now, as they have always been, the enemies of mere worldly wisdom. We fight to maintain the paradox that, despite all arguments to the contrary, the world is spiritual in origin and can be won for God : that human life can be made in fact, as it is in origin, divine : and that the road to this achievement lies, as it has always lain, not through self-exaltation but through self-sacrifice—a self-sacrifice consecrated and enjoined by the life and death of the Incarnate Son of God.

Among all the obstacles to the acceptance of Christianity none is more potent than the charge of dogmatism. It is a charge frequently brought by those who have no conception of its meaning. A dogma is the statement of a theory confirmed by experience, and no progress of any kind in art, science, or even sport, is possible unless such pronouncements are encouraged : to object to " dogmas " as such is the negation of thought.

But, it will be replied, the assertion of dogmas as unchangeable and unchallengeable truths is equally fatal to thought, and it is not to be denied that in the past Christian dogmas have operated to discourage the search for truth : the names of Galileo or Darwin are enough to prove the point. The "truths" of Christianity, dogmatically expressed, and enforced by authority, have been regarded as containing all the truth a man need know and as resting on a basis more secure than any other. It is not to dogma as such that we object, but to the Christian use of it : against that we feel bound to protest in the name of Truth and Freedom.

To such a criticism a Christian is bound to reply, and it is the object of this book to suggest the lines on which his answer must be framed.

He will begin, if he is wise, by disclaiming any special privilege for the truths which he believes. It is true that they rest on what he considers a divine foundation, but he would be the first (or should be) to allow that all Truth is in a very real sense divine. The more certain he is of his own conclusions the less will he wish them to be shielded from inquiry or supported by external and irrelevant aid. If he does not believe that Truth is strong and prevails, he has no claim to the title of a follower of Christ.

Secondly, he will remind his critic of the difference between Knowledge and Belief. Christianity is a creed and not a science. We repeatedly assert our belief in the truths of our religion, and the belief may approach certainty, but we ought to be ready, and even anxious, to declare that faith is not the same as sight. The Christian creed, like the creed of a scientist, is a thing to be continually tested by experience, and is based, like his, on assumptions which admit of no ultimate verification.

Thirdly, he will assert his conviction that, while in a very real sense Christianity does contain all the truth which a man need know, its acceptance does not qualify a Christian, however high his position, or any body of Christians, however distinguished, to pronounce authoritatively on the conclusions of those who work in other fields. He will disclaim any allegiance to any school of art because it may have received the blessing of the Church. He will distrust "ecclesiastical" pronouncements on science or on literature, because he holds that, while Christ came into the world to teach the truth about man and the truth about God, and bade His followers hope for further knowledge, He so clearly laid the main emphasis on conduct and the motives which should guide it, that the "ecclesia" which He founded should primarily follow along that path. The Spirit which is to "guide us into all the truth" is not a monopoly of His followers, and the attempt to claim it as such has had disastrous reactions.

It is a further, and a legitimate, question, whether the acceptance of dogmas should be made the condition of Church membership. It seems at first sight attractive, and in the best sense "Christian", to maintain that the qualification should be moral and not intellectual. There is a very real sense in which this is true, but the attempt to act upon it in practice would involve us in the continual attempt to judge our neighbours, and would put a premium on hypocrisy. It would appear that the Church, like any other association for the promotion of a cause, must stand for something definite, and there can be no question that what it stands for is the Divinity of Christ. The fact that the Gospel was preached among Greeks, whose intellectual curiosity was boundless, forced the Church to attempt definitions and for a time to exaggerate the

importance of dogma : but without a clear knowledge of " what seems good and true " no teacher of truth and goodness could hope to do his work. Dogmas are the necessary skeleton of religion ; but skeletons should not be obtrusive, nor claim to constitute the whole body. The layman has every right to ask that we should remember, and confess, the inadequacy of our thought and language to express ultimate truth : he may comfort himself by reflecting that the only formulary he is asked to accept is the Apostles' Creed, and that the Baptismal Vow does involve the definite acceptance of certain moral obligations.

To descend from these abstract arguments to the position of the present day, it seems vital that Christians should, now as always, ask themselves first what they believe and why they believe it : that they should frankly acknowledge their ignorance of what they do not know : that they should present themselves to the world as people who believe themselves to be in possession of the secret of all good life and in touch with the power which makes all good life possible : and that they should not refuse but welcome the test which their Master proposed, that they should be known by their fruits.

We must therefore begin by an attempt to explain what it is that we believe.

CHAPTER I

OUR BELIEF ABOUT GOD

THE Christian creed is twofold, resting on a certain belief about God and a certain belief about Man. It is tempting to separate them and to concentrate on the latter, as being easier both of comprehension and of acceptance, but to do so is both historically and intellectually unsound. A generation ago it would have been safe to call attention to the universal acceptance of Christian morality (in theory at least) among all the progressive races of mankind, and to have argued that the world had given its decision. To-day the challenge to Christian morality no longer comes from a single German philosopher but from a great European nation. Again, a generation ago we knew and cared little for the opinion of the East : to-day we cannot forget that those who accept Christian morality are far outnumbered by those who have never heard of it. The argument, as will be shown, has still validity, and may even be held to have gained in force, but it clearly needs restatement.

But even if we could suppose that ethics and theology were quite independent—and no schoolboy who ever plays cricket or tries to handle an oar can ignore the close connection between theory and practice—it would remain obvious that to accept Christ as a moralist and to refuse the theory about God on which all His moral teaching rested would be to be false to all that history and psychology have to teach us. It will remain, no

doubt, an abstract possibility that a man who is entirely right in his conduct may be entirely wrong in the reasons which he assigns for it, but the "rightness" of Christ's conduct is so superlative that the possibility of complete error in theory may be discounted as negligible.

(*a*) *Christ's teaching*

We must begin then with Christ's teaching about God: it is a view which colours all His teaching, for the hope and the duty which He sets before His followers is that they should be like God—perfect as their Father which is in Heaven is perfect. It is left for St. John to say in so many words "God is Love", but it is impossible to read the Synoptic Gospels without realising that he is crystallising his Master's teaching into a sentence, and that this is the basis of all that Christ has to say about God.

Though this is the logical sequence, it by no means follows that it is the necessary or the right line to take in commending the Christian faith. Personally I should rather hold that it is wiser to begin with the picture of Christ's life. The ordinary man has no taste for abstract argument, and is apt to believe that he was getting on very well without facing ultimate problems such as the existence of God. On the other hand, he has a keen interest in moral problems and his judgment of them is usually sound. If he can once be brought to realise the uniqueness of Christ as a moral teacher he will approach the more abstract questions without hostility and even with interest. And it may be possible to make him see that only by refusing to think at all can he avoid difficulties which are inherent in any attempt to go below the surface

of things, whether made by theologian, philosopher, or man of science.

Christ's view of God is for the Synoptists summed up in His use of the title Father. For Him God is all, and more than all, that is implied in the best Fatherhood that we can conceive. He uses a word the implications of which are unmistakable, though to us neither that, nor any other, word can be free from misleading associations. St. Paul was true to his Master's spirit when he wrote that from this Divine Fatherhood all earthly fatherhood takes its name.[1] A father is responsible for the existence of his child: he is bound to care for its well-being in every sense of the word, and most for those interests which seem to him most vital. He is capable of understanding his child, for the child shares his nature and is, on its side, so far as its childish powers allow, capable of understanding and appreciating its father's motives and desires. No father worthy of the name can refuse to sacrifice himself for his child, and no child can without shame refuse to sacrifice itself for its father. This is because they are united by the bond of Love shown and felt in its simplest and most natural form. The love of a father extends to all his children alike and cannot be impaired by any failure or ingratitude of theirs: the prodigal son is welcomed by a love, emphasised indeed by the special circumstances of the case, but in no way greater than that given to his very different brother. A father may be driven to punish, but his punishment, which has its motive in Love, can never be the final word in his dealings with his child.

There is no question that this is the predominant view taken of God by Christ, and those who accept it must explain in this sense passages which seem at

[1] Eph. iii. 14.

first sight inconsistent with it. It is probable that to a band of Jews, members of a nation of moralists, the apparent failure to discriminate between the evil and the good, the just and the unjust, would seem a saying hard and indeed unbearable. Our recorders have done full justice to these tremendous sayings of Christ, but it may be suspected that they have indemnified themselves by over-colouring the words of condemnation which He spoke, and have imparted to them an Old Testament flavour which was absent from the words as spoken. The mediæval use of fire for purposes of torture, though no doubt arising from these sayings, has thrown back on them a meaning which they did not bear : fire is purifying as well as destructive, and the burning of what is worthless and corrupting to leave untouched what is sound seems to suggest a use of the metaphor not out of harmony with Christ's general teaching.

Though this is the predominant note in the picture which Christ draws of God it must not be assumed that His teaching can be summed up in one title, however great that title may be.

It is St. John again who tells that " God is Light and in him is no darkness at all ", but here also we find that the phrase only crystallises what we had learnt from the earlier Gospels. The idea of Truth as an abstraction naturally meant more for him than for those simpler minds who inspired the earlier records, but the single mindedness and purity of heart (so disastrously limited in modern interpretation) which Christ praised suggest the same virtue for man, and are based on a similar conception of God. None of the critics who doubt the historical accuracy of St. John question that the idea of God which he ascribes to Christ is implicit in, or at least consistent

with, the view which underlies the teaching given in the Synoptists.

Here then is the ultimate Christian doctrine of God—that He is a loving Father, infinite in love and (or perhaps therefore) infinite in power : a spirit capable of being approached by other spirits : the source of all that this world shows of goodness, beauty and truth : intimately concerned with the spirits which He has made and seeking, as a true Father, to bring them to the full knowledge of all that He is and does, so far as this is consistent with a reverence for their freedom.

It will be well for us first to see what evidence for this view, other than Christ's word, exists, and secondly to confess frankly the problems which it leaves unsolved.

(*b*) *General evidence for such a view*

It must be confessed that most of us look at the world in a very unintelligent way. The paralysing thought of its vastness both in space and time often prevents us from making any real attempt to grapple with its meaning, and the indolence in man is always on the look out for an excuse for avoiding intellectual effort. The result is too often an assumption like that made by the seventeenth century Duke of Newcastle that " nobody knows or can know the cause of anything ". Let us try and shake off this indolence and look at the world with a more hopeful eye, to see whether we find in it anything to support our assumption.

For it is useless to deny that we must make assumptions, if we are to progress at all. Assumptions lie at the root of all our knowledge of whatever kind : science could do nothing without its belief in the existence of the universe and its intelligibility, and such certainties as the

human mind can reach come only when the assumption is verified by further knowledge. Religion has everything to gain and nothing to lose by avowing frankly that it is based on an assumption which it cannot prove but is endeavouring to verify. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him":[1] in other words, we have to begin our religious life by assuming first that God exists and secondly that He desires to be known—for knowledge is the reward of the seeker.

It is clear then that there is nothing irrational in the mere fact of making such an assumption, and there are some very intelligible grounds, not only for making it, but for making it in the only form in which religion can recognise it, that, namely, of a belief in a personal God.

It may be assumed that the first thing which strikes an observer of nature is the appearance of design, and that this suggests to him a controlling mind. He may see good reasons for abandoning the belief, but he can hardly avoid it at first: if he be of a thoughtful turn of mind, he will find support for his first impressions in the undoubted existence of Beauty, for he will know, or philosophers will tell him, that beauty cannot exist without a mind to conceive it. If, after these first and crude impressions, he passes to consider more closely life as he sees it around him, he must be struck by the phenomenon of growth or evolution. His first tendency will be to think that this suggests a simple answer to his problems, and to believe that with a little more knowledge we shall learn how the organic comes from the inorganic, animals from vegetables, life from death. He may stop at this point and rest content to abandon his earlier impressions, subsiding into a crude materialism, but, if he perseveres,

[1] Heb. xi, 6.

he can hardly avoid the conclusion that things are known by their fruits and not by their roots—though he may never have heard the epigrammatic phrase of Dean Inge. The significance of an acorn lies in the fact that it can become an oak : man is not explained by his material origin but by his spiritual and intellectual development : a river is a river and not its source in the mountain. If therefore we wish to form an idea of the power behind the world as we know it, we shall do so best by concentrating our attention on the highest forms of life we know. There can be no question that as we pass up the ladder of existence we find the most conspicuous feature to be the development of what we call personality. It is unnecessary for our present purpose to discuss precisely where it begins, but no one doubts either that man is personal or that his superiority to the other animals lies precisely in the possession of personality. He alone, so far as we know, is able to " look before and after ", to view a whole series of events in relation to himself, to make plans for the future and to feel regrets for the past. He alone, so far as we know, can consciously learn from the experience of the ages and share his experience with his fellows.

To the ordinary mind it seems clear that a higher order of living cannot be produced by a lower : the inorganic cannot produce the organic, death cannot produce life, any more than a motor can make a man. It seems a legitimate assumption that no mere impersonal force could create persons. It remains, and must always, remain *conceivable* that the whole process of creation has its origin in accident, in the blind collision of forces, but there are many (of whom I am one) who will feel that to admit even so much is to strain the meaning of words. I do not think that I am myself able to conceive it, at

least not in the sense in which I am able dimly to conceive the existence of a Creator. It has been epigrammatically said that the mechanical explanation of the universe would be quite satisfying, if only it were not we poor machines that had hit upon it.

It is not a valid argument to object that any conception of a Creator must itself shade off into the inconceivable. All human knowledge breaks down before the infinite, and science has its own inconceivabilities which it yet holds for truth. The point is that some conceptions are framed on lines consistent with our normal methods of thought, as far as such thought will go, whereas others are in flat contradiction with them.

In any case—and that is all for which I am at the moment contending—there is nothing irrational in the belief that a world in which persons are the highest form of existence was made by One who is Himself Personal. It is reasonable to go further and to maintain that personality as we know it is but a pale shadow of the personality of God.

There is another argument which supports the former. All persons are by their very nature creative. They have the power to relate objects to one another in their mind and to form, as we say, " a world of their own ". Everyone creates his own world out of the persons and the objects and the events which come within his experience. This world belongs to him and to no one else, and apart from him it has no coherent existence. The worlds which they thus create are very fragmentary and imperfect, but the effort which they represent is creative, and may not unfitly be termed divine. It is not necessary to be a philosopher to see a real meaning in the phrase that " the world is held together in the thought of God ",

just as our thought holds together the tiny world in which we live.[1]

And when, with this light to guide us, we pursue our researches into the meaning and implications of personality we are confronted with another, and an amazing, fact. As soon as a person has discovered that he *is* himself, someone quite distinct from others, there begins to arise in him the rudimentary belief that he cannot live for himself alone. The veriest savage has some conception of a duty which may compel him to risk his life for his tribe, and as we trace the growth of the human race we find this conception growing with it. It is an idea shared by none of the lower animals, for the passion with which a mother will fight for her young shows only that she still regards them as part of herself, as is proved by the brevity of the feeling.[2] There are some who may find an exception in the dog, that mysterious animal which "alone among all that breathes on earth has succeeded in breaking through the prophetic circle, in escaping from itself to come bounding towards us, definitely to cross the enormous zone of darkness, ice and silence that isolates each category of existence in nature's unintelligible plan".[3] I should myself dare to believe that he has "caught it" from man, his self chosen friend, and if it be something of his own and not acquired from without, well, I for one should not grudge him his possession.

[1] It will seem irreverent to some, but not, I trust, to many, to quote the question put by Tweedledee to Alice about the Red King's dream: "If he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?" The final chapter of that great book is entitled Which dreamed it? "You see, Kitty," the heroine remarks, "it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream of course—but then I was part of his dream, too!" There is many a true word spoken in jest.

[2] Those who are interested in this argument will find it stated in a more imaginative form in Eton Fables (Longmans) *The Amphitheatre*.

[3] Maeterlinck. On the death of a little dog.

Canon Streeter puts the argument in more philosophical form : " Nothing stimulates the growth of conscience in man so much as willing service of and conscious fellowship with a Being infinitely higher than himself. Why should not relations with a master, made in the image of God, do for the dog what relation with God can do for the master ? "[1]

Bacon's opinion is worth quoting. " They that deny a God destroy man's nobility. For, certainly, man is of kin to the beasts, by his body, and if he be not kin to God, by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. It destroys likewise magnanimity, and the raising of human nature. For take an example of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man, who to him is instead of a God, or *melior natura*, which courage is manifestly such as that creature, without that confidence of a better nature than his own, could never attain. So man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith which human nature in itself could not obtain. Therefore, as atheism is in all respects hateful, so in this, that it depriveth human nature of the means to exalt itself above human frailty ". (*Of Atheism.*)

In any case, there is this unique possession of the highest existence in nature, the belief that the best thing to do with one's self is to give it away. It is a belief which contradicts everything it has learnt from nature : it might seem at first sight to be a deliberate kicking down of the ladder by which man has arisen from the brute. But there is another explanation : may it not be that in this unexpected, this unreasonable, instinct there is another hint what personality at its best must be ? If

[1] *Immortality* (Macmillan) p. 83.

so, need we hesitate to claim that that quality too cannot come from a source which knows nothing of it? May we not dare to add to our belief that God is Personal the belief that He has as His highest attribute the supremely personal quality of unselfish love?

It will be observed that I have said throughout that the Christian belief is that God is personal: it is doubtful whether it would be orthodox to say that "God is a person", and in any case the expression is liable to be misleading, involving as it does an attempt to think of God as a glorified human being.

(*c*) *Its practical value*

We do not claim that this, or indeed any, conception of God is essential to a good life: but we do claim both that it appears to us to be true and that it is of great practical importance. It is possible to sing without accompaniment, but the experiment is risky for a singer without great natural gifts. It is possible to practise all the Christian virtues without a belief in the Christian God, but only for those gifted beyond common men, and such men do not afford a safe guidance for others, either in religion or in anything else. What is certain is that the ordinary member of a congregation will not dare to lift up his voice unless he feels the organ behind him: with that help he feels that his insignificant efforts are at any rate well directed and will not cover himself with ridicule. In the same way a Christian feels that his puny strivings after goodness are not mere individual things nor his failures merely contemptible, because he believes that he is in harmony with the purpose of the world, and that the tune which he is feebly and laboriously rendering on earth is one with that which is sung by the

stars in their courses and by the Angelic host before the throne of God. With such a God it is not presumptuous for human beings, who are themselves personal and themselves capable of love, to believe that they may be in communion. Too much need not be made of the universality of prayer, for it is only prayer to such a God which is really worthy of the name. It should never be forgotten that the primary object of prayer is to establish and strengthen this feeling of communion, and not to obtain a blessing : or, rather, that the blessing sought for is the supreme one of understanding the Mind of God. To limit it to petition is a fatal mistake, unjustified by philology—for neither the Greek nor the Latin word for prayer necessarily bears this meaning—disastrous to theology—for it involves the assumption that God's will needs to be, and can be, changed—and dangerous to character—for it reduces the conversation between a child and its Father to the whine of a beggar. Those who regard prayer as the use of a machine for the satisfaction of their personal wants will readily come to believe that the machine is out of order.

It is needless to point out that such a conception does not necessarily or naturally spring from the idea of God which we have been describing. We may hope to know Him with a knowledge which, though partial, will be real : we may dare to believe that He is concerned with our hopes and fears, and willing to show us both how to fulfil the one and to quiet the other : and we may feel sure that the more we comprehend His nature and His purposes the safer and the better our lives will be.

In this respect, as in others, Christ's teaching corresponds with our conception. He encouraged petition, because it is natural and right for children to tell their Father what is in their heart, and because what is in

their heart has a very real bearing on what it is good for them to receive: but He never left it doubtful that God's purposes for His sons are the best. When He gave to His disciples the model Prayer on which all others should be based, He put first, three times repeated, the prayer that these purposes should be fulfilled, and limited direct petition to the request for enough health and strength that they might play their part in this fulfilment. To study His own prayers is enough to put us to shame for the purely selfish character of most of those we use. *Corruptio optimi pessima*, and Satan has little reason to tremble when he sees us upon our knees, converting the great instrument of unselfishness into a machine for gratifying our personal desires.

(*d*) *The evidence of Revelation*

It has been shown that a faith thus reached is not irrational, but, on the contrary, rests on strong and positive foundations entirely apart from what is technically called revelation. A thinker who has reached this point will be prepared for a divine revelation, and when he finds that such a revelation is proclaimed, he will approach it with a disposition towards acceptance. To him it is natural, if not inevitable, that such a God as the one in whom he dimly believes should wish to communicate with mankind, and he will study an alleged revelation to see how far it coincides with his expectations.

He will find that, among a race distinguished above all other races for its care for and realisation of the unseen, a Man appeared who claimed complete knowledge of God and therefore a complete knowledge of the right life for man. He will find that the God so proclaimed was intensely personal and infinitely loving, and that the

right life for man was proclaimed to lie in the development of personality by unselfish love : further, that this possibility was offered to all mankind and no longer confined to a single class, as among the Greeks, or to a chosen nation, as the Hebrews hoped. Man as such was declared capable of sharing the divine life. He will find that this teaching, obscured for a time by the inability of its first hearers to comprehend it, spread through the whole Western world with a rapidity unparalleled by any similar movement of unaided thought, dominated its political and economic life, and has remained ever since as the (often unacknowledged) motive of the best lives in history. He will feel that such a life and such a death as that of Christ was worthy of God, the greatest of all Poets, and that the response of man has proved him not utterly unworthy of his Creator who "became human that we might become divine".

(*e*) *The relation of this belief to other knowledge*

The Christian belief in a personal and loving God rests, as has been said, on strong grounds : it depends on facts of which any other theory must take account : but it would be childish to ignore the difficulties which it leaves unsolved. It has been our temptation in the past to assume that the knowledge which may one day be ours is already won. All that we can claim is that the truth which we possess must form an integral part of any scheme of the universe which may hereafter be drawn up, and that we have a right to reject any scheme which does not provide for its inclusion. We believe in the unity of Truth, and we have a right to demand that others who profess to seek it should not arbitrarily reject truths reached on other lines than theirs.

If a homely image may be pardoned, it may be said that seekers after truth are like men working at a vast jig-saw puzzle, in which various workers choose, according to their temperament, those pieces of the puzzle which seem to fit their mood. Let us suppose—though the supposition of such a subject no doubt begs part of the question—that the picture is Carpaccio's famous St. George and the Dragon, though this is unknown to those at work. The men of Science are working at the ground of the picture : they find plenty to occupy them there : there are flowers in profusion, and creeping things and half-mangled bodies—all calling for the most careful and most brilliant reconstruction, but none of them suggesting, save perhaps by contrast, the subject of the picture as a whole. The Artists, in pursuit of Beauty, have found a very different task. To them the picture is one of blue skies and seas : they piece together rapturously the fair lady in distress, the shadowy rocks, the distant palace, the gallant ship afloat, but they know no more, and care no more, than the men of Science about St. George and his mortal foe. The last group knows at least this much, that the picture is one of struggle : they see in it a conflict between good and evil and know that it is in such conflict that Goodness is to be found. They cannot tell perhaps which side is to be victorious : the dragon is very terrible and very strong. They may even find the lance to be broken, and lament that all is lost ; but the lance does not break till its work is done, and to some among them comes the joy of finding that the enemy of mankind has met his match at last.

It is not surprising that the workers at such a picture seem to themselves and to one another to have little in common : the raptures of the artist seem frivolous to the scientist or the moralist : the moralist thinks the

man of science blind to the things which matter most, and his pity is repaid by a scorn which despises mere ideas out of relation to solid fact. But the picture is one, and the seekers will meet in peace at the Inn at the World's End where there are "beds for all who come".

This childish image will at least suggest that there are vast tracts of human knowledge which lie outside the specifically Christian province, and even within that province there are many tremendous questions of which we shall be wise to confess our ignorance.

We do not know why God made the world: we cannot explain the existence of evil: we have no knowledge of the destinies or the value of the animal kingdom: we cannot even guess why the world seems to show signs of being rather an experiment than, as we should expect, a work proceeding on a definite plan. We know very little of God's ultimate purposes, whether for it or for us. There is no Christian philosophy to answer our ultimate questions as to reality, or to provide a conclusive answer to those who doubt the freedom of the will.

The list of our ignorances could be indefinitely prolonged: we need to sit in all humility by the side of our scientific brethren who, like ourselves, have been purged of an arrogance with which they once claimed to have an explanation for everything. We wish to accept and to profit by all the truth they can reveal to us, for they, like us, have found something firm on which to stand, while the unimaginable waves of our ignorance wash round our feet. Their company will do us nothing but good, unless they ask us to deny the truths which we have found in our own experience and in that of others to be real—that there are in man ideas too great for his expression and hopes beyond his own power to fulfil,

which are yet the very breath of his true life, more "real" than anything outside him, and come—for whence else can they come?—from the great Giver of Life in whose image we are made.

(*f*) *The relation of this belief to Art*

Before we leave these high themes, it is essential to repeat and to emphasise the fundamental unity which in this respect exists between Religion and Art. Science may rightly claim that it deals with facts which are capable of definite verification: it believes many things without absolute proof, but this absence of proof is a weakness which it hopes to conquer. Religion and Art are only secondarily concerned with what the scientist calls facts. The former deals essentially with all those things which defy exact analysis and definition—the hopes, fears, and longings of mankind: it glories in the necessity of Faith, and gives little value, in comparison, to the assent to ascertained truth. The artist, whether he be painter, musician, or poet, agrees with the Christian in attaching the highest value to something the existence of which cannot be demonstrated, and in seeking for it by methods which he cannot explain or justify to the crowd.

The fact that artists seek for Beauty while the Christian seeks for God constitutes no doubt a very important difference, but this should not be allowed to obscure the great fact that the interpretation of life which they both give is, strictly speaking, unscientific. With different accents, and for different purposes, they repeat that question which religion has borrowed from Spenser and repeats to a materialistic age:

> Why, then, should witless man so much misdeem
> That nothing is but that which he can see?

Spenser here asks the question for no more serious purpose than to establish his right to assume the existence of Fairyland, but it is equally legitimate in the mouths of those who seek either after Beauty or after God—or of those who believe the two searches to be ultimately one.

It is lamentable that religion should be left to defend itself without the help which it has a right to claim from the poets and the artists. The blame for the alienation must be shared between both parties, but their cause is so essentially the same that it is sad to see the fact so seldom recognised. The mechanistic philosophy which would exclude religion can find no room for any of the other great adventures of the spirit of man; romance cannot survive in a world in which religion is an absurdity. In the words of a brilliant modern critic "romance is inseparable from a certain kind of faith in man, a mystical faith perhaps, not depending upon mundane manifestations of his power, but upon some sense of the inherent greatness of his soul—a hope, perhaps, that he is more than mortal."[1] This is the faith which has inspired all great poets, being, as they are, among those who are most closely in touch with truth. "To set limits to reality", as Lord Balfour has reminded us, "must always be the most hazardous of speculative adventures", and he adds that "to do so by eliminating the spiritual is not only hazardous but absurd."[2]

And if Religion and Art seem thus predestined allies in the campaign for the reality of what is unseen, it should be remembered that the Science from which they

[1] Mrs. Campbell, *Shelley and the Unromantics.*
[2] *Science, Religion and Reality*, p. 16.

seem to differ to-day is quite another thing than the Science of the nineteenth century.

This is a point of view which is seldom presented to the ordinary man, who, as has been said, is inevitably many years behind the scientific times. He does not realise, for example, that the "mechanistic" sciences of chemistry and physics no longer hold the undisputed sway to which their claims once seemed so strong. It is natural that a chemist should seek to explain all things in terms of chemistry (just as a banking expert will tend to explain all national life in terms of finance), but nowadays the biologist and the psychologist would claim an equal right to be heard, and they are as averse as the religious man from the belief that the universe is "susceptible of complete explanation by the actions and reactions of two very minute and simple kinds of electrical sub-atom."

But the allies, like other allies in history, are at least as much occupied with their differences as with their agreement. Religious people regard Art with the same sort of suspicion with which an Englishman regards a Frenchman, and the suspicion is returned with interest. It is even more common to find an artist who regards Religion as meaningless than to find a good Christian who denies the claims of Art: the latter does at least usually make some attempt to appreciate his rival, lamentable though the results may be: the former in his arrogance often despises the attempt, and has sometimes been known to proclaim that the service of Beauty absolves him from any effort at right Conduct.

(*g*) *And in particular to Literature*

It may be worth while to illustrate the point from the case of literature, which has closer connection with

Religion than the other arts mentioned, and has in the past done it such noble service. It seems of late to have failed in its task of giving that testimony to the inherent greatness of man and to his infinite possibilities, which is the greatest contribution it can make to the world.

In the great days of what is called the Romantic Revival the poets realised their mission : Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley in different ways gave their testimony, and in the next generation Browning wholeheartedly, and Tennyson with less certainty, took the same theme as their own ; it is a fact confounding to lovers of poetry that Dr. Bridges omitted any selection from the works of the former in his book entitled *The Spirit of Man.*

This strange omission from a book with such a title seems to demand the counter-assertion that Browning is, with one exception, the greatest of Christian poets : he reveals, as has been truly said, " the tragic absurdity of human life ". He " thinks of perfection as real, so that the imperfect human pilgrim is not a mere wanderer on from one stage to another, nor merely an instrument with other finite things in building up the fabric of the Universe ; he is thought of as one compelled by the Universe to put into his own small being all that the whole world means." So it comes about that he " either ventures the impossible, like *Sordello* ' thrusting in time Eternity's concern ', or cuts his ideals to fit the short human life allowed him, the ship's cabin of Bishop Blougram's allegory—an inglorious compromise."[1]

This is man as the poets see him, " Born too great for his ends, never at peace with his goal " : intellectually he is condemned to try and grapple with mysteries which elude his comprehension and baffle his powers of expression, while morally, as Browning is never tired of showing,

[1] W. P. Ker, *Collected Essays.*

he has the opportunity of realising in Time something which is eternal, for he knows how to love, and love, as St. Paul said, is the one thing which can survive the change from the conditions of earth to those of heaven. There is but one "standard", there as here, and, just as the tiny atom of gold in a debased currency retains its individual value, so every atom of real love is imperishable and passes current in the courts of heaven.

But their successors have been unable or unwilling to carry on the work; the characteristic production of the present age is not poetry, still less poetry with a high sense of mission, but novels, and too often novels in which "feeble character and diseased action have become the centre of interest." "Our sympathies are asked not for the man who is with difficulty overcome by a powerful temptation, but for one who succumbs by sheer poverty of intellect and feeling."[1]

These last sentences are quoted from one of the latest studies of Shelley, and it will only surprise those who know little of his character to find him ranged among those who knew and illustrated the fundamental union between poetry and religion. He knew, as has been well said, that "Christ was the first Romantic; and the greatest." It was because he gradually came to this knowledge that he was able to rise above the crude negations of his boyhood, and to make a real contribution to the religious thought of his age. It seems at first sight paradoxical to claim this for the author of "Queen Mab," for the undergraduate expelled from Oxford for blasphemy, for the young man who at one time claimed as a distinction the title of atheist. But no one can read his latest and greatest poems, or his prose essay on

[1] Mrs. Campbell, *op. cit.*

Christianity, without seeing that he had come to realise that Christ embodied the ideal after which he strove, and bore no relation to the tyrant God against whom he was so anxious to revolt. He lived to proclaim himself in a very real sense a follower of Christ's teaching.

And with this enlightenment came a great advance in his poetry—an advance so great that we are left to wonder how much the world lost in that most tragic and unnecessary of all the accidents which have robbed it of many of its greatest sons. The poetry of the eighteenth century, with all its grace and felicity, could not be supremely great because it had lost its belief in Man: the greatest of the Romantics recovered that belief, and when he was able to add to it the faith that God is on Man's side his belief secured him a serenity of mind in which his poetical genius could at least have full play: it then became not impossible to claim for Man that he is capable of what is highest.

Akin to this was Shelley's rediscovery (anticipated by Wordsworth) of the imagination as "the great instrument of moral good." The eighteenth century had notoriously distrusted both imagination and feeling: it is not surprising that in it both religion and poetry were starved. There is every excuse for a man born into the England of the Regency, who saw in religion nothing but a repressive force, stifling the natural expression of feeling and discouraging every effort of the imagination.

Religion is wiser to-day, but it still suffers from the not unnatural distrust which its past history provoked. It is nowadays the commonplace of every pulpit that Christianity is a religion of adventure, but many intelligent people persist in treating that as a paradox, and insist that Christianity is nothing but a great insurance society against the pains of hell.

If religious people have taken too little pains to understand the poets, it is at least arguable that the poets still take far too little trouble to understand Christianity. The gain would be infinite if both could realise that they stand side by side in a material age testifying that the things which are not seen are eternal. They have no quarrel with the men of science : on the contrary, while the poets hold that Truth is the road to Beauty and the religious men hold that it is a road to God, they are united in the belief that they have certainties greater than any which the laboratory can reveal, and can utter in their own language the boast with which Abt Vogler makes his claim upon reality

> The rest may reason and welcome : 'tis we musicians know.

It may be, and is, an act of Faith to believe in Religion : but it is foolish to forget that it is only by a very similar act of Faith that we believe in the reality of Beauty. The search is one, and to deny its reasonableness is to cut off at a blow most of what separates us from the brute creation. To believe in Christ is at least as " reasonable " as to believe in Shakespeare or in Beethoven.

The following sentences from a review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, published after these pages were written, may be taken as evidence that the view suggested in them is not out of harmony with present tendencies in philosophy and science. " The gradual but accelerating movement away from materialism on the part of scientific men seems to have given fresh heart to the philosophers. It is obvious that philosophers find science since 1908 much more congenial than the science of the nineteenth century. It is less dogmatic, more imaginative, and deals with a much more mysterious universe. If

the philosopher says that mental phenomena cannot be accounted for wholly in physiological terms, and that the behaviour of living organisms cannot be exhaustively described by the laws of mechanics, he not only cannot be scientifically refuted, but he will find a considerable number of scientific men to agree with him. And if he says that the whole evolutionary process cannot be attributed to chance, but points to the gradual realisation of some supreme purpose, he will still find scientific men to follow him—a little faint, perhaps, but pursuing."

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

(*a*) *Is it enough to call Him a "good" man?*

THERE are some to whom all our discussions so far will seem a mere evasion of the central point. They will say that there is no use in postponing the issue, which must be the divinity of Christ, and that on the answer to this question, and on that alone, must it depend whether a man is or is not a Christian. If that is accepted other questions will settle themselves, and it is on that point therefore that attention must be concentrated.

There is a sense in which they are obviously right. The ultimate question must be What think ye of Christ? and it is a question which every Christian ought to be anxious to put; but the mere fact that it is an *ultimate* question should warn us against the mistake of putting it first in order of time. A great deal of harm has been done by inviting a belief in Christ's divinity from those who are very imperfectly acquainted with His character and have no clear conception what "divinity" involves. To say baldly that Christ is God, and to demand an assent to that proposition, is to make a statement which He never made and to pursue a method as alien as well can be from that which He adopted.

The answer of the ordinary man to such a challenge is not in doubt. He will acknowledge that Christ was a very good man, by far the best he knows: he will

shrink, legitimately, from the word "perfect" because that exceeds his knowledge: but he will say with truth that this is a very different thing from acknowledging Him as God, and that for his part he sees no sort of need for any such assumption. We have to ask ourselves not how far such an answer satisfies our canons of orthodoxy, but how Christ would deal with so imperfect a faith.

It is very clear that He would not have regarded it as worthless, but can it be doubted that He would have brushed aside, for the time at any rate, the personal question, and would have bidden His hearer to think first of the nature of God and of his duty to Him? Until we have a definite conception of God's character it is childish to discuss the question of the divinity of Christ. For Himself He is contented to be followed because His teaching appeals to the heart of man, or even (if need be) "for the very works' sake", because He knows that if a man wills to do the will of God he will assuredly come to know of the doctrine whether it be of God or no.[1]

For us the doctrine comes with sanctions which it could not possess for Christ's hearers: it is attested by the history of two thousand years and by the evidence of that crowning "work" of God, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, but the order of belief remains as it was in Christ's time: we must accept Him first as "a teacher come from God":[2] we must test for ourselves, in the light of all we know, His doctrines both of God and man: and if, at last, it is only "for the works' sake" that we believe Him we must realise that we are only among the least of His disciples.

We have, then, to invite men to look at Christ, not with

[1] John vii, 17. [2] John iii, 2.

that perfunctory glance which is all that so many sensible and respectable people accord to Him, but with a definite desire to form a picture for ourselves. If this is done, any honest man will come to two conclusions : first, as has already been said, that to separate Christ's view of God from His moral teaching is impossible, and secondly that to call Christ "a good man", or even "a very good man", is a silly misuse of language. Let him try, as honestly as he can, to draw up a class list of those who seem to him to deserve the title and he will be struck with the futility of the attempt. Some of his heroes, like St. Francis, will be frankly and confessedly followers of a great original : others will exhibit one conspicuous virtue and fail as conspicuously in others : none will pass the test. A Christian can ask for no better logical position than that which is secured to him by the attempt to suggest the name of any man who can in the same sense be called "good."

No Christian will wish to underrate the personal claims of the Buddha, but it is necessary to point out that his denial of the existence of God led him to a complete pessimism about this world and its possibilities, which is unattractive, and indeed incomprehensible, to the Western mind. Further, there seems something contradictory in an exhortation to practise unselfish love in the hope that the need for love will thereby be brought to an end. If Love is not an ultimate reality, if life is a thing to be escaped, there is clearly no "gospel" in Buddhism. Christians do not love in hope of a reward, but, believing as they do that life and love are in a very real sense synonymous, they live in the blessed hope of a fuller life to come. Christ as a teacher has no need to shrink from comparison with Buddha, and there can be no more beautiful subject for a Christian dream than the welcome

awaiting him from the Christian God whom he "ignorantly worshipped."

Theosophists seek for a religion behind all other religions in which their central truths shall remain while their distinctive tenets disappear. Christianity claims itself to provide such a synthesis. In simpler language, a devout Buddhist (such as the Lama in *Kim*) will have nothing to unlearn, but will find a fulfilment of his hopes of which his master dared not bid him dream. The devout Mohammedan will find that God not only possesses those attributes of majesty which he so devoutly claims for Him, but also qualities which the Prophet thought inconsistent with His supremacy. It is inconceivable that the Mohammedan God could become incarnate, for an incarnation would conceal His most characteristic attributes.

The influence, and the growth, of the Mohammedan religion may seem to demand that something should be said of its founder, but, incalculable as his influence has been, he has never been the object of a personal devotion comparable to that paid either to the Buddha or to Christ, nor, to speak frankly, is it possible that he should be. The courage and the singleness of purpose which he showed in his early years cannot blind us to the signs of degeneration which his later life betrays, and no teacher who fixed morality as a permanent code, and believed in physical force as a means of spreading his views, can conceivably be regarded as having the keys of ultimate truth.

Christ stands before the world as unique probably in the extent, and certainly in the quality, of His influence on the morality of the world. We need another epithet for Him than "good", and to acquiesce in that adjective as adequate is mere slovenliness of mind.[1]

[1] An illustration from a modern book may serve to emphasise to what

(*b*) *His moral teaching and influence*

With this brief preface let us proceed to examine the facts more closely. The son of a carpenter, whose home was an obscure Galilean village, lived some thirty years in His native land, never travelling more than some hundred miles from home. Of His life we know practically nothing except for the events of some two years. We have no reason to believe that He ever came in contact with any man who either by learning or character was able to influence Him, with the solitary exception of John the Baptist, whom most historians would regard as merely a revivalist preacher of very exceptional power. He came of a nation which clearly had a genius for religion, and had reached conclusions about God far in advance of those attained by any Western race, but in His time all its official religion would appear to have been vitiated by a formalism which seems to us petty in the extreme.

Of His teaching we possess three, or possibly four, records, but it is unsafe to regard St. John as giving a record of words actually spoken, and St. Mark, though he repeatedly testifies to the effects of what He said, refrains, in a manner which is to us most tantalising, from giving any discourses at length. The other two evangelists give a fuller account, but it is notorious that

lengths slovenliness of thought can reach. In a recent book on Lenin Trotsky claims for him that "the historical past knows no man who has exerted such influence, not only on the destiny of his own land but on the destiny of mankind." The obvious question arises whether Trotsky intended to include Christ among the objects of comparison: if he did not, he was making a concession we have no right to expect from him: if he did, his remark must seem absurd even to those who regard Lenin as a figure of colossal importance. To a Christian the mere idea of such a comparison savours of blasphemy, but Trotsky is speaking not of quality but of quantity of influence: the point is that the remark is in either case preposterous.

they repeat one another, as well as using much of Mark's scanty version of the teaching. The whole body of doctrine recorded would hardly cover more than a hundred pages of an ordinary book, and could certainly be read through by any intelligent reader in a couple of hours.

Yet no one who did so could fail to find a coherent account of a theory both of God and man which has revolutionised thought on both subjects, and, in spite of all criticism, remains, so far at least as man is concerned, the only satisfactory summary of goodness that we know.

In St. Mark there are approximately three hundred verses containing utterances of Christ : even these, when read in conjunction with their context, are enough, as has been often shown, to give a living and coherent summary of Christ's teaching.

It has further to be remembered that these narratives were written by, and for, men who, by their own confession, were repeatedly unable to understand what He was speaking of, and, by their own account, were capable of the grossest misunderstanding. They recorded, as best they could, the words which they had heard, but it is safe, on any canons of historical criticism, to say that they added nothing valuable of their own, and must often have blunted the edge of what was said to them by their lack of comprehension. To say this is not to disparage what they did : it must always remain the most wonderful tribute paid by disciples to a Master whom they knew themselves incapable of fully appreciating : their narratives breathe an honesty of purpose so transparent that to question it is the absurdest vagary of literary criticism.

He taught them the infinite importance of the individual : mankind He regarded as a brotherhood, in which it was as wrong, or rather as absurd, for one to do,

or wish, evil to another as it would be in members of the same family. The virtue which He called love, meaning thereby a willingness to help others even at cost to oneself, was the quality which held this brotherhood together. Anything in the nature of self glorification or self assertion was clearly wrong, and it was here that the apostles, as true representatives of the natural man, found His teaching hardest to accept. To the end they cherished the belief that He could not mean what He said, and that they in particular must receive some personal reward which would take the form of pre-eminence over other people, and even over one another. But they record with scrupulous accuracy the repeated warnings which He gave them against regarding even Kingship, the highest earthly position, as anything but an opportunity for unselfish service.

The two great metaphors which Christ uses to describe His followers show what is meant by the self-denial which He bids them practise. "Salt" has no use except in relation to other things: "light" exists to show something that is not itself. In themselves they have no meaning and no use; both find their true value in relation to something else.

For—and here is the second point—Love is not only the quality which binds mankind together: it is also the quality by exercising which the individual finds his own truest and fullest life. To seek to find "life" by any other method is to lose it: to "lose" one's life in the service of others is to win it for ever. The object is stated in another form as the "denial" of self—that is, the denial of self as a primary object, the refusal to consider the effect of any action on oneself as being the main point of interest.

It is needless to point out that this central point of

Christ's teaching was fully appreciated and developed by those who attempted to develop and expound His teaching. St. James, St. John and St. Paul were men of very different temperaments, but in this they emphatically agree. To St. James it is "the royal law" that a man should love his neighbour as himself: to St. John love is the same thing as life, and the man who does not love is dead already: while it is the praise of love which inspires St. Paul to a hymn which, merely regarded as literature, takes its place among the greatest achievements of the human race.

It is unnecessary to claim that in all this Christ was uttering what had never been said before. It was no part of His own claim that He was doing so: on the contrary He took every opportunity of emphasising His connection with the great prophets of His own country: He had not come to destroy but to fulfil. The greatness of the Jewish contribution to the knowledge of God should never be underrated: all that can fairly be asked is that critics should not, at one and the same time, reproach us with the absurdities and indecencies of the Old Testament, and ask us to believe that there was nothing supremely original in Him who disentangled the great truths which the nation had reached from the mass of error which encumbered them.

For, if the doctrine was not verbally original, it is certainly true to say that no Jewish nor any other European thinker had ever made it the central point of his teaching. It is only because we forget this that we rank Christ with other teachers who have sung the praises of unselfishness. With Him it was the essential thing, the one quality which raised man above the other animals, and the one virtue capable of universal application. It may seem unnecessary to add that He asked

of His followers not only an appreciation of the quality but a definite and sustained effort to acquire it. And here no doubt we find the true "moral difficulty" which keeps so many people from Christianity. Mr. Chesterton was right when he said that Christianity had not been tried and found wanting, but had been found difficult and not tried. The moral difficulty of "denying ourselves" in Christ's sense is indeed prodigious, but the difficulty lies in ourselves and not in the doctrine. Christ unmistakably taught that by Unselfishness or Love every human being could come into touch with what philosophers call Reality and He called God, and the first question which has to be asked and answered is whether the teaching is true.

Nor must we ever forget that the doctrine is two-sided: the opportunity or the possibility which we claim for ourselves must be allowed to everyone else. There are some who feel the splendour and the truth of the doctrine so far as they themselves are concerned. It strikes an answering chord in their heart. They do not find it difficult to believe that there is in them something by which they can claim union with the Highest, nor that this something may be their capacity for Love. But they have still to learn that they must claim nothing for themselves which they are not prepared to concede to everyone else: they are not called to membership of a select aristocracy, but to a fellowship with all mankind: they are asked to feel the Enthusiasm of Humanity of which Professor Seeley spoke in *Ecce Homo*.

There is nothing more obvious in Christ's life, as we have it recorded, than the shock continually given even to His intimate followers by His continued association with those whom the world regarded as beneath notice. If the Pharisees complained that He went about with

Publicans and sinners, the disciples found equal scandal in His talking with a woman—and a Samaritan too : and it clearly is not without purpose either that one of the greatest of the parables deals with the goodness of a Samaritan, or that another story emphasises the gratitude of a Samaritan leper. Christ's doctrine is not only that Love can save a man, but that it can save all men : and once more we have to ask, is that teaching true ? If not, then indeed Christianity is false, though it may survive as a noble error.

Malim cum Platone errare, said the old maxim : should we prefer to go wrong with Christ, if wrong it is, or to be right with the world as our ally ? There is no more truly Christian utterance than that of doubting Thomas, who, when the disciples hesitated to follow their Master to all the dangers of Jerusalem, closed the debate with the despairing cry " Let us also go that we may die with Him ! "[1]

No candid man will deny the right of a Christian to take this view, nor will he question that the desire to follow Christ as a supreme guide has influenced many who stood apart from organised Christianity. The tributes to Christ's character from non-Christians would be well worth collecting. It is enough here to quote one. Shelley, who held that " the great secret of morals is love, and that the only real sin is wilfully to injure a fellow creature ", said that of the moral doctrines of Christianity he was " a more decided disciple than many of its most ostentatious professors ", and his testimony is given without that faint flavour of patronage from which that of lesser men is seldom free.

[1] John xi, 16.

(c) *The alleged difficulty in regarding His teaching as of absolute and permanent value*

But there are many who, while feeling the attractions of loyalty to such an ideal, will ask whether Christ did in truth supply a sufficiently complete answer to the problems of the world to make Him a satisfactory guide, whether, to put it bluntly, He could have foreseen the complexities of modern life or was frankly legislating for His own time and His own country.

We are here brought up against two problems on which a vast amount has recently been written, the general problem of Christ's knowledge and the particular problem arising from His apocalyptic utterances.

(i) *His apocalyptic utterances*

The latter, as the smaller, may be dealt with first. It has been maintained that Christ regarded the end of the world as imminent and therefore was content to provide His followers with what has been called an *Interimsethik*—a morality adequate to the brief space which would elapse before the final judgment. It is conceivable, the critics say, to love your neighbour as yourself, to forgive injuries and to neglect your own interests, over a short period, if a cataclysmic end to the world is shortly to make all such matters indifferent : it is only when this condition is removed that the teaching becomes misleading. Or, from another point of view, Christ may have been right on His own assumptions, but was wrong, as He would have been ready to admit, if those assumptions proved false.

It is impossible not to be reminded of the efforts of the

dwellers in *Erewhon* to make sense of the Lord's Prayer by altering one of its petitions to read "Forgive us our trespasses, but do not forgive those who trespass against us". Some of the critics are no doubt inspired by a similar anxiety to rob a "hard saying" of its sting, but the problem remains a real one. In the main it must be a matter for the expert to decide on the authenticity and the probable meaning of Christ's apocalyptic sayings. To myself it appears probable that, on this as on other points, sufficient allowance has not been made for the fallibility of our reporters. Christ plainly spoke much of an approaching crisis: His followers, steeped as they were, like all their countrymen, in apocalyptic doctrine, interpreted His words in the light of their own presuppositions. Men who were capable after the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of still inquiring when the Kingdom was to be restored to Israel were not likely to interpret aright any saying which dealt with things beyond their own horizon: Christ's anticipations of the future and His own interpretation of events which He foresaw would inevitably transcend their comprehension. The apocalyptic discourses remain something of a difficulty, but it is little short of ridiculous to suggest that Christ was consciously preaching a morality which was only to be valid for a time.

It is impossible to suppose that if He had consciously been preaching such a morality He would have given no hint of the fact. The apostles would have been only too ready to accept and to record any saying of His which palliated the austerity, and lessened the difficulty, of His precepts. The fact that they make no such suggestion is in itself enough to prove that Christ was preaching a doctrine intended to be valid for all time, and independent of any historical event, however transcendent.

It is interesting to recall that Dr. Schweitzer, the most learned exponent of the extreme critical position, has yet felt Christ's teaching, mistaken as in some ways he holds it to be, so profoundly true that he has sacrificed a distinguished position in the musical world of Europe to devote his life to ministering to the physical needs of the most degraded savages in tropical Africa.

(*ii*) *The alleged limitations of His knowledge*

We pass to the consideration of the larger question. How far did the limitations of Jesus' knowledge and experience affect the value of His moral teaching? At this stage of our inquiry it is obvious that the subject must be discussed without reference to the theological questions involved.

From the recorded life of Christ there is no reason to infer any knowledge, as distinct from wisdom, such as was not possessed by the well-educated Jew of His time. He accepts without question the views current among His contemporaries, except where they concern matters of conduct. He speaks of possession by evil spirits in the language of His time, and in one case at least appears to acquiesce in the attribution to David of a Psalm which modern criticism agrees in denying to him.

It would appear that too much may easily be made of this instance. Christ's object at the moment was to prove to His questioners that *from their own presuppositions* unexpected results would follow. His purpose, as always, was not merely to give instruction, but to encourage His hearers to think for themselves.

It is generally agreed that, on any conception of Christ's nature, any other attitude on His part would have

been impossible. Even if He possessed, consciously or subconsciously, the fullest knowledge of modern science, it is almost inconceivable that He could have displayed it. The only field in which it was possible for Him to display His knowledge was in His dealings with man, with his physical nature and with his spiritual possibilities.

It is clear that the question of the so-called "nature miracles" can only be discussed in the light of the presuppositions which we bring to the discussion. For our present purpose it is enough to say that those who believe His knowledge to have been perfect in the field where examination is possible will not be anxious to deny to Him a knowledge of the essential qualities of matter beyond anything which we at present possess.

With regard to the general physical nature of man, and its relation to health and disease, the records suggest that Christ knew all, and more than all, that is known to the ablest physician of the present day. This is not to suggest that He possessed a technical knowledge of anatomy and physiology beyond that of His contemporaries, any more than a knowledge of other scientific facts as yet undiscovered, but that He had an insight into the relation of mind and matter beyond any that we have yet securely reached. He was unmistakably able to cure diseases of very diverse kinds. The miracles of healing, which were a stumbling block to a generation not long past, have ceased to be so regarded at the present day. No one who has even a bowing acquaintance with the claims of spiritual healers, or of Christian scientists, will be anxious to deny their possibility nor even, given certain conditions, their normality.

This would not, of course, apply to the raising of the dead, which falls under the considerations suggested with regard to "nature miracles" above.

The general attitude towards such cures has undergone a radical change in recent years. The dispute rages, no doubt, as to the part which faith plays in such cases, and how far faith is to be regarded as another name for credulity, but the reality of such curing is no longer doubtful. Nothing but a fundamental scepticism as to the fidelity of our records, for which there is no conceivable intellectual justification, can suggest any doubt that Christ was a great Faith-healer.

Some faith-healers, no doubt, have little knowledge as to the process by which they work : in some cases it is a matter of what, from want of a better name, we may call personal magnetism : but whatever the power may be it is unquestionably one which Christ possessed, and the use which He is recorded to have made of it certainly suggests that He did so on a basis of knowledge. He approaches each case as an individual problem : He varies His methods to suit its particular needs, but He never suggests the doubt that He will succeed, provided only that the requisite faith is present in the sufferer. The confession " He could there do no mighty works because of their unbelief "[1] speaks volumes for the fidelity of the record and for the view of His powers which He had instilled into His followers. " He knew what was in man ", and it was on the basis of this knowledge that He worked.

The question of His own attitude to His miracles of healing belongs to a consideration of His character rather than of His powers, but it is worth while here to remember that He consistently deprecates their use as evidence to His mission. He takes steps to prevent their being published : in some cases He even forbids it in so many words, and the possibility that His words would be

[1] Matt. xiii, 58.

believed "for the very works' sake" is one which He regards as almost a sign of failure. His claims rest on a deeper knowledge of human nature than could be proved by His mastery over its physical side.[1]

(*iii*) *His alleged ignorance of modern conditions*

We pass therefore to what is the most fundamental question of all. Did Jesus show a knowledge of the spiritual nature and the spiritual needs of man sufficient to justify the claims made on His behalf? The obvious answer will be given that, though it is just conceivable that He may have possessed it, the conditions under which He lived prevented Him from giving any satisfactory evidence on the point. The conditions of modern life, it will be said, with its social and economic problems, are enough to make the idea inconceivable: the discoveries of science have not only completely revolutionised the view of the external world which He inevitably held, but they have so altered our view of human nature, its origins and destinies, that His teaching, sound perhaps as far as it goes, is completely out of date. It rests on a view of man which we no longer hold.

To this Christians will reply that vague talk about changed conditions must not be allowed to take the place of definite statement. Is it, in fact, the case either that modern conditions have vitiated Christ's conclusions, uttered as they admittedly were in a very different world,

[1] To this rule there is one exception, and it is significant. John's disciples, sent by their master to ask for Christ's credentials, are told to report the miracles which they hear and see: but this is followed by the statement that, for all John's greatness, he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Matt. xi, 2 ff.

Such evidence belonged to the Old Dispensation of which John was the last and greatest representative.

or that science has so completely revolutionised our conception of humanity that His teaching has lost its force?

The first of these problems is the easier to face. No one can wish to deny that Christ said nothing to suggest that He foresaw the growth of modern nationalities with their conflicting claims, or the developments of industry with which we are familiar. He lived and spoke in a small country with a political problem of its own, but even into its burning local politics He refused to be drawn: He lived in a society where there were no pressing industrial problems, nor, apparently, any class condemned to the extreme bitterness of poverty. The poor of whom He speaks with so much sympathy, were very unlike those who crowd the slums of a modern city. It may well seem that in such circumstances He can hardly have known or given the answer to our very different perplexities.

There are at least two instances which suggest that so summary a dismissal of His claims would be false to history. Let us take first the case of slavery.

Slavery existed in Palestine in Christ's time, though no doubt in a comparatively innocuous form. Jewish slaves were on the whole well treated and had a certain legal security unknown elsewhere, but it is impossible to doubt that their masters at times abused their position: the very existence of laws to protect them shows that the danger existed. From end to end of the New Testament there is no word to suggest that the existence of slavery was in question. Christ never mentions it. St. Paul, who alone deals with the problem, is content to say that a Christian master must not despise a Christian slave and that a Christian slave must not revolt against his master. He went so far as to send back a runaway slave. To him

it seems enough to remind both that their common relationship to God must transcend the other relationship which exists between them.

It was nearly two thousand years before the unspoken word of Christ took effect, but when slavery was finally abolished it was unmistakably His orders that were being obeyed. The leadership in this country, which, to its everlasting honour, gave the impetus to the movement, came quite definitely from Christian men and was inspired by Christian motives. Wilberforce never ceased to regard the cause as in the strictest sense a divine mission, and urged it both on his constituents and on the House of Commons as a definite call to obey Christ's will. The commonsense of the country was with him, but the inspiration came from Galilee.

Again Christ never spoke of the position of women, but it is more than a mere coincidence that it is only in Christian countries that the essential inferiority of woman has ceased to be assumed. It is impossible not to be struck by the prominent part which women play in the Gospel story. This indeed was probably the case with the narrators themselves : it was not only in Samaria that they " marvelled that he spoke with a woman " : it is hardly fanciful to suggest that in other cases too there is a hint of resentment at Christ's readiness to listen to them. But there the fact is. Women were among His best friends and among His most loyal followers, nor is there ever the faintest hint that He regarded them as inferior to the rest. Once more His teaching or His action has had its inevitable, though belated, effect : it is not merely the position of the Virgin Mother, nor the natural reverence paid to her, which accounts for the honourable position now held by women in every Christian land. Jews may still be called upon to give

continual thanks to God that they were not born as women, but Christ's example was enough to convince St. Paul that "in Christ Jesus there could neither be male or female" but that all must be "one in Him",[1] and the conscience of the Christian world has tardily accepted another unspoken command.

These two examples may well cause us to hesitate in accepting the view that Christ's teaching has no bearing on the problems of the present day, or that its full meaning has been exhausted. They would seem rather to indicate that its significance has not yet been fully realised. And it is at least doubtful whether any modern teacher, however plenary his inspiration, would be able to give any clearer advice for the solution of modern industrial difficulties than to say that it is the duty of every man to love his neighbour as himself, and to realise the rights of others to enjoy, so far as may be, the same fullness of opportunity that he claims for himself. It is true that this is "a counsel of perfection": it claims to be nothing else: but there is no sort of justification for the modern tendency to believe that a counsel of perfection is one which we need not attempt to follow. Christ definitely taught otherwise: it was His knowledge of human nature which led Him to give the uncompromising command "Be ye perfect", just as Mahomet's lesser knowledge of human nature led him inevitably to the contrary conclusion that the only way to get anything out of mankind is not to ask too much. We may, in our weakness, sympathise with Mahomet, but history has pronounced an uncompromising verdict against his method and in favour of the idealism of Christ.

The apparent strength of Mohammedanism rests on its refusal, or rather its inability to accept and assimilate

[1] Gal. iii, 28.

new truth, and it is not a strength which any Christian need envy. Mahomet as a teacher of morality was perhaps five hundred years ahead of his time, but as he fixed the limits of possible progress in moral thought he is at least as many years behind ours, and the gap increases with every generation. He stereotyped, in fact, the best Arabian morality of the sixth century. He gave mankind, what a very large proportion of its members want, a fixed and definite doctrine, absolving them from all necessity of thought, and his success and his failure spring from the same thought. He is the patron saint of the "diehards", and neither honesty nor courage are enough to justify a refusal to think or to allow others to think. Every movement which disturbs Mohammedan society is a reaction against the attempt to bring the religion of the prophet into harmony with modern knowledge. These reactionary movements, which have indeed the authority of Mahomet behind them, are invariably successful, and that is why Mohammedanism with all its obvious merits has, and can have, no future as a religion for the civilised world.

> It is a pathetic, and humorous fact that one of these conservative reactions in Egypt came under the patronage of Mr. Gladstone and was welcomed by him as the effort of patriots rightly struggling to be free. So difficult is it for a great Christian statesman or a great Liberal to realise that men prefer bondage to freedom and hug their spiritual chains. It was similarly impossible for a good Whig a century ago to believe that the "Serviles" were the really popular and democratic party in Spain.

We have heard much lately of the need for "a new spirit in industry", and much that has been written on the subject is worthy of all praise, but we must not forget

that the spirit which is rightly asked for is that spirit of love and mutual forbearance and consideration which Christ, whose ignorance of modern conditions we are so often invited to deplore, proclaimed as essential two thousand years ago.

(*iv*) *His attitude towards patriotism*

Another common criticism is that Christ made no contribution which would help us to solve the problems caused by the rise of conflicting nationalities : that we do not know, for instance, what He would think of patriotism. It is true that His name has been repeatedly invoked both as a supporter of its claims and as their opponent.

Here, as elsewhere, it would appear that the modern mind insists on treating as of primary importance the things which Christ regarded as secondary. It is impossible to maintain that patriotism in itself is a quality so magnificent as to override higher claims, if such exist. To say so is to adopt the doctrine of " My country, right or wrong ", which can be held by no thinking man. At the same time it is perfectly clear that patriotism is one of the qualities which evoke in the highest degree that unselfishness which for Christ was the one thing needful, and it is ridiculous to suggest that He would have neglected this aspect of its influence. He deprecated race hatred based on old and half-remembered prejudice, as He showed in the case of the Samaritans, but He had no hesitation in identifying Himself with the race in which he was born, nor in showing pride in His nationality. Simon the Zealot must have been a most uncompromising patriot, and we have no hint that Christ blamed his zeal, though He no doubt endeavoured to moderate its violence.

It is worth while remembering that He wept over Jerusalem.

So far there is little difficulty, except for those who insist that the only possible alternatives are a Jingo patriotism or a colourless internationalism. The practical difficulty arises if the question is put whether Christ in any conceivable circumstances would have fought for His country.

Once more we must beware of putting secondary questions in the place of those that are primary, and of talking as if War in itself had a definite and invariable quality. Most wars of which history tells us have been fought for bad reasons, either for sheer aggression or for a mistaken point of honour : but that does not prove that all wars are inevitably wrong, and that no conceivable cause could justify a nation in taking up arms. It may be granted that in most wars of which we know Christ could not possibly have taken part, but are we to conclude that any such action would in any circumstances be impossible for Him—and if for Him then for any of His followers ?

The usual answer to the first part of the question would be in the affirmative, given enthusiastically by all Pacificists, and with some reluctance by others. Christ clearly deprecated violence : He enjoined the completest forgiveness of injuries : He told us to turn the other cheek to those who struck us.[1] Is it conceivable that He could ever have consented to employ force Himself ?

It is necessary to proceed with caution, and to remember that the main purpose which Christ had in mind was perfectly clear, and is quite independent of the particular answer we give to this question. He believed that hatred

[1] As against the literal minded, it is worth remarking that Christ did not in fact follow His own precept literally. (John xviii, 23.)

and enmity were devilish things : He believed and showed in His life that forgiveness was the right method by which to treat an injury to oneself, nor is it really disputable that He was right. Our hesitation comes (or so we like to think) from the fear that our forgiveness may be misunderstood. The misunderstanding is no doubt possible, and occasionally justified, but as a matter of fact there are very few people who can be found to say that they have actually tried the method and found it to fail. Once again the saying is true that the doctrine has been found difficult, and not tried in practice. In any case there, unmistakably, is the cardinal doctrine with regard to injuries to oneself : and on the whole the conscience of civilised mankind gives it a reluctant assent. There are few of us who, looking back in cold blood on the prompt and successful retaliation of an injury, are entirely satisfied with the recollection.

Forgiveness, for a Christian, is the right method because it is an attempt to follow the God " who declares His almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity ", and also because the effect at which it aims is to " gain one's brother " by inducing him to empty his heart of hatred and malice.

But it will be noted that we have so far been dealing with injuries to ourselves : have we an equal right, or an equal obligation, to forgive and tolerate injuries done to others ? Here, I confess, we have no definite saying of Christ's to guide us : I can only say that the whole tenor of His teaching would seem to me to suggest that it is our duty to resist them at any cost to ourselves. I do not believe that respect for our neighbour's personality, or love for him, if we are to use that phrase, compels us to sit still while he injures the personality of another : the more we care for anyone the more intent

we shall be to prevent him from doing what is clearly wrong.

Prevent him, yes—but by physical force? I cannot but think that far too much stress is laid on the distinction between physical action and any other—between a blow and a word. I can understand, and even in a sense admire, a doctrine which forbids any kind of interference with or criticism of the actions of another, but I cannot grasp the principle which allows any extremity of violence in criticism, but shudders at the idea of physical action. Christ denounced the Pharisees in words which cut like a lash, because He regarded them as ruining the souls of others: would He have blamed the blow which saves an innocent child from outrage? He told of the Samaritan who succoured the victim of the robber: if the time of the story had been shifted half an hour, who can doubt that the priest and the Levite would have regarded the struggle as no affair of theirs, and that the Samaritan, with whatever force he possessed, would have tackled the thieves, like the good neighbour that He was?

There is a great deal of nonsense talked and written on this subject, but by bitter experience we are learning that Christ's doctrine contains the ultimate truth. Selfishness, whether in nations or in men, is the enemy to be fought: it will very often disguise itself under specious appearances, but Satan can never cast out Satan. War, in itself, has no moral quality except in so far as it is known by bitter experience usually to spring from selfish motives and inevitably to produce terrible suffering: we rightly regard it with fear and loathing, and it may be hoped that the world has learnt enough never again to embark on it lightly. But Peace is not necessarily the reign of unselfishness, and a treaty of peace may enshrine

in itself the principles of hatred. In so far as it does so it contains within itself the seeds of its own dissolution.

There is a more excellent way, and it is the way which Christ showed us. We have been taught to speak of "the Locarno spirit", and we hope and believe it to be real: we believe in the League of Nations and in the spirit which governs its deliberations: but we must never forget that if, and in so far as, this spirit is good it is because it is the spirit of Christ, an evidence that the Christian world is at last beginning to be convinced that He was right when He told us that Love is the only secure basis for human society, for the society of nations as well as for each individual society.

(v) *His attitude towards private property*

It is not uncommon to hear it said that Christ's whole attitude towards private property was inconsistent with the life of a highly developed society. He is sometimes claimed as the first of the Communists, and His command to "take no thought for the morrow" is sometimes quoted as showing His complete lack of interest in all such matters.

Once more it is necessary to correct a misapprehension. We, or most of us, are desperately concerned with questions of material prosperity: there are very few people who, whether consciously or unconsciously, do not regard them as of the very first importance. We have to face the fact that Christ quite definitely regarded them as trivial—trivial, that is, in comparison with the other subjects of which He spoke. The difference is so complete that we find it difficult to believe that He did not share our preoccupation with such topics, and

consequently give a quite unreal prominence to the references which He made to them.

It is perfectly clear that He warned His followers not "to be anxious" about the morrow, and few of us can feel the caution to be unnecessary: it is true that He emphasised the danger which besets the rich of becoming entangled in the things of this world, and indeed the danger is patent. If He was right in His main contention that selfishness is the root of all evil, no other view was possible for Him, for it is obvious that the poor are far more unselfish than the rich. But His main purpose is unmistakable—to show both rich and poor that there are other questions of infinitely greater importance: if He feared the effects of "the deceitfulness of riches", He feared also "the cares of this world",[1] which operate with a more inevitable pressure on the lives of the poor. The only thing which we can say with certainty is that—however strange it may seem to us—Christ did not reserve His sympathy for the poor, but was genuinely sorry for the rich man. There is little doubt that He could have uttered in all seriousness the ironic phrase of Anatole France—La miséricorde de Dieu est infinie: elle sauvera même un riche. The mere fact that this seems to us a paradox shows how far we have been content to remain from the mind of our Master, and how little we in fact accept His estimate of the relative importance of the things of the world and those of the spirit.

It is natural that the story of the young man who was bidden to sell all that he had and give it to the poor should be quoted as an indication of Christ's general attitude, but it is fair to remember that the story, as it stands, is an isolated one: Christ did not hesitate to enter

[1] Matt. xiii, 22.

the houses, and accept the hospitality, of the rich, and we have no reason to believe that He uttered any protest against their position. The advice to a single young man of (apparently) great wealth to part with his riches for the good of his own soul is advice which might be, and no doubt often has been, given by moralists who had no prejudice against private property as an institution, and it is an insecure basis on which to found so large a conclusion.[1]

It is true that the early Church in Jerusalem, which must be held to have been in close touch with the principles of its Master, made an experiment in Communism which is described in the early chapters of The Acts: but it is important not to read more into the story than is actually there. The basis of it can hardly have been compulsory, or Ananias and Sapphira would have had no land to sell, and it would appear probable that no more is meant than there was an attempt at community life on a large scale. If this is so, it is not only the cynic who is justified in reminding us that, not long after, it was necessary for St. Paul to organise collections of money for the benefit of the Church in Jerusalem.

The fact that the experiment seems to have broken down and not to have been repeated suggests that it was not regarded as a vital part of Christ's teaching: Communism, in common with every variety of Socialism, is a perfectly legitimate conception, and Communism on a Christian basis is the only type which could possibly succeed, for Communism on a purely intellectual foundation like that of Plato, or Communism on a basis of class hatred, is doomed to failure. But it is not the methods

[1] Nor should it be altogether forgotten that he was told that he would "live" if he kept the commandments: it was only when he self-righteously claimed to do so that the harder task was laid upon him.

of social regeneration but the spirit which animates them which can be called Christian or un-Christian. Much socialism has a real claim to the former title, for it is based on that recognition of the value of every individual which was Christ's leading principle, but there is a Socialism, as there is a Communism, which is entirely alien from His spirit, and no school of economists or politicians has an inalienable right to claim His blessing.

(*vi*) *His apparent indifference to Art and Science*

There are some to whom Christ's apparent indifference to Art will seem to disqualify Him for their allegiance. We have been brought up to regard Truth, Beauty and Goodness as three roads leading to perfection and with equal claims upon us. The equality of the claim in each case is no doubt open to question, for the general verdict of mankind would rank Father Damien, as an individual, above Benvenuto Cellini, but there is no doubt that if it could be shown that Christ regarded Beauty as a thing indifferent it would argue to us a real limitation in His character.

It must be granted that there is little in the records to prove that He gave Beauty the exalted place often claimed for it. He was a Jew living among people distrustful of Art and seeing in nature rather its terrors than its loveliness, nor were His disciples likely to appreciate or to record sayings which might seem to them trivial. He looked at nature, it is plain, with the eye of a lover, and that is no doubt the first step towards artistic appreciation, but we have only His almost lyrical praise of " the lilies of the field " to show that He could look at it also with the eye of an artist. Beyond that we can only say with safety, applying our own formula, that

no unselfish service to a pursuit recognised as good for its own sake could fail to win applause from Him, and that an art which helped God's children to recognise the beauty of their Father's creation would be in the completest harmony with His own purpose and His own mission. It may be added that if He did speak more frequently of beauty it is highly probable that His Jewish disciples would not have recorded His words on a subject which aroused no interest in them, and secondly that He showed Himself a true artist in His use of language.

It is equally hard to quote definite sayings to prove that Christ would have given to the unselfish pursuit of Truth a similar claim upon the activities of mankind, but it admits of little question. A teacher who laid such paramount emphasis on the virtue of sincerity, and on the singleness of eye required by those who would see God, could not possibly have undervalued the work of those who dedicate themselves, often with no hope of reward, to the discovery of truth of any kind. The truths which they seek to establish vary, no doubt, in importance and value, but for Him the merit would lie in the unselfishness of the search. He may not have actually uttered the praise of Truth as the power which makes man free, but St. John's saying[1] is unmistakably true to His spirit, and it was for the Truth that He demonstrably sacrificed His life.

It is the most lamentable of all the many failures of Christ's official followers that they have failed to see and to proclaim to the world that the Truth which they profess to hold has nothing to lose, but everything to gain, by the discovery of truth of other kinds. They have acted as if truth were of two hostile varieties, and have so fallen themselves into a kind of Manichean heresy far more

[1] John viii, 32.

damnable than those which they so enthusiastically condemned. They were perfectly right to guard the Truth which they possessed, and to assert that their inability fully to comprehend, or clearly to express, what they believed was no argument against its validity, but this very assertion of theirs should have warned them against discouraging and repressing attempts which might have thrown light upon their central Verity. They have paid the price of their mistake in the suspicion with which their protestations of a love for truth are nowadays regarded : for our present purpose it is enough to say that their obscurantism, so far from being dictated by Christ, was in direct opposition to everything that we know of His character.

On this subject Browning may be held as the best representative of the Christian conscience. He is in no danger of underrating Art, and can sympathise with the efforts of weak brethren like Andrea del Sarto, or Fra Lippo Lippi : he can appreciate, from the depths of his own learning, the passionate devotion of the Grammarian to insignificant details of grammar : he sees both artist and scholar as true servants of Christ, but he knows where the Master would have put the emphasis, and reserves, as St. Paul did, the highest place in this other Trinity for the virtue of unselfish Love.

Footnote to Section

As I have two or three times referred to St. John's Gospel in terms which may seem to disparage its direct authority, I think it right to put it upon record that I personally believe it to have St. John's authority behind it. It is frequently forgotten that it answers many questions which the Synoptists leave unsolved, and that, in particular, it is much harder to believe that there was no visit to Jerusalem before the end of

Christ's ministry, and no attempt to win her, than that there were visits and attempts such as St. John records. The point is well brought out in a book which deserves more attention than it has received, Scott Holland's *Christianity and the Fourth Gospel*.

The question of direct Johannine authorship is no doubt a very difficult one, but I feel it myself easier to believe in the theory which attributes long life and continued development to a man of religious genius than to that which attributes a work of first-class literary and intellectual power—an imaginative work then, if not since, unexampled in literature—to an author of whose existence we have no other proof. The recent study of the question by Lord Charnwood (*According to St. John*) shows how the evidence strikes an unprejudiced historian, and deserves careful attention: it is interesting, for example, to read that, whereas "John the Presbyter" is in some learned circles regarded as the probable author of the Gospel, Lord Charnwood is unable to find any trustworthy evidence that he ever existed at all.

(*d*) *The width of His influence*

Our object so far has been to suggest that the moral teaching of Christ has not only been, as a fact of history, the basis of European civilisation—a fact which no one disputes—but also that, so far from being out of date, it supplies the only profitable guidance for the future progress of mankind. It is true that many things important for that progress have been left for later ages to discover, but they have discovered nothing which shakes the pre-eminence of the qualities on which He insisted, nor anything which He could reasonably be expected to have told His followers. There is no reason to question the saying of the Johannine Christ that He had many things to say which His disciples could not as yet bear.[1] Like Pilate,

[1] John xvi, 12.

we have found no fault in Him, not even the fault of a mistaken emphasis.

It is worth while to emphasise the insignificance of the charges brought against Christ's personal character. So far as I know, the only criticisms on points of detail which are worth considering are those against His "cursing" of the fig tree and His permission of the destruction of the Gadarene swine. The former, based as it is on a single word (and that not even attributed to Him), is only valid at all if we accept the verbal inspiration of the record, and as for the second it may be questioned whether we, who habitually slaughter animals for food, are serious when we condemn an act—if it was indeed an act and not a coincidence—which brought peace to a troubled spirit at the expense of the life of a number of pigs.

Another, and a more serious, charge is based on His treatment of the Pharisees. Mr. Montefiore suggests that the bitterness of His attack on them shows the common human weakness of a desire to blacken the character of one's adversaries, and that Christ spoke of them as a partisan. It is quite true that it is easy for us, carried away by the violence of His invective, to forget that they had very real virtues—that they *did* give tithes of all that they possessed and that their fasting was not all for purposes of display. Here again we may not unfairly assume that the apostles, considering their origin and upbringing, were delighted to hear the denunciation of the Pharisees, and were not careful to record any qualifications it may have contained. But it is safer to say only that the Pharisees stood then, as now, as the representatives of an official religion which was primarily concerned with externals, and that true religion has no deadlier enemy. The subsequent history of the Christian

Church does not suggest that even language so extreme as that which Christ admittedly used was strong enough to convince the world either that a true religion does not aim at being "seen of men", or that "no one cometh to God save by the road of holy humility." If the Pharisee had been able to add the Publican's prayer to his own his worship (apart from his self-righteous preface) would admittedly have been perfect: he is condemned because of the two possible prayers he chose the wrong one.

Indians who are attracted by Christ's character are often distressed by His violence in condemnation: to us the inability to feel a righteous indignation seems a far greater defect in them.

We have spoken so far of Western civilisation, because to most of us Western civilisation represents the highest achievement of the human race, but it is time to remind ourselves that the supremacy of the Christian ideal is by no means confined to the Western world. We did not invent Christianity, and there is no conceivable reason why it should appeal more strongly to us than to others. In point of fact, the Christian ideal makes in many respects a stronger appeal to the Eastern mind. The age which regarded Missions as a mistaken form of Western philanthropy has passed, and no sane student of religion can fail to see in the spread of Christianity in the East the most striking phenomenon of the last century.

It is a truth which will only be questioned by those who know nothing of the facts, that the personality and the moral character of Christ have the power to command the allegiance of the East as well as the West. No one who knows anything of India to-day can question His influence there, and the hostility which China shows to Western representatives of Christianity is based on a very

natural suspicion that they represent their Master very imperfectly. Both in China and in Japan those who are most anxious for moral reform draw their inspiration increasingly from the story of the Gospels.

The point is worth emphasising, for the average Englishman is quite blind to the nature, as to the success, of missionary work. It is in part the amazing influence of Dickens (almost, if not quite, the greatest literary force since Shakespeare in our language) which is responsible for the persistence of the belief that the one object of a missionary is to get the heathen clothed. It is quite true that two or three generations ago the usual attitude of a Christian missionary towards a heathen religion was one of pure patronage : nowadays he is only too anxious to seek for, and to build on, the truth which he can find. As for the success of missionary work, while statistics are admittedly misleading and no Christian would wish to insist upon them, it is silly to ignore the fact that in India Gandhi admittedly owed his unexampled influence to the inspiration of Christ's teaching, or that among the outcastes Christianity is the one force which is working a change undreamt of a hundred years ago. " The record of the life and personality of Christ has done far more educationally for India than the whole of Western literature."[1] There are, no doubt, enough bad Christian converts to explain the sneers of some Anglo-Indians, but those who remember that the first real missionary efforts of our Church are little more than a hundred years old will find plenty of reason to wonder at what has been accomplished, and will take pleasure in

[1] Mayhew, *The Education of India* (Faber & Gwyer), p. 74. The whole book is full of similar testimony, all the more valuable as not coming from a missionary but from an educational expert. Cf. p. 185 " The Bible is perhaps the only asset of Western culture that has never yet been referred to with a gesture of reproach or hate."

recalling the ridiculous fact that *The Times* of 1872 committed itself to the statement that none of its readers had ever seen a convert. It is necessary to say plainly that talk about "the failure of missions" is on an intellectual level with that of the wiseacres who laughed a century ago at the ridiculous idea of a locomotive engine.

We are confronted, then, with the amazing fact that some words spoken, and imperfectly recorded, during the brief ministry of a carpenter's Son in Galilee have changed, and are still affecting, the course of history: that two thousand years have not invalidated them, nor suggested any vital additions to their context: that, in short, any man who in any continent aims at moral excellence still has no better standard to apply to His aims than the question whether they are such as Christ Himself would have approved. The greatness and the universality of the claim is so unparalleled that no comparison is even possible. It is possible to argue that other men have been wiser than Christ, but this can only be done by denying the primary instinct of mankind that goodness is its first and highest concern. If that instinct is a true one, and Goodness is the real goal of Wisdom, Christ stands confessed as not only the best but the wisest of the sons of men.

(*e*) *The personality of Christ*

So far we have limited ourselves severely to the consideration of Christ's moral teaching, and have said nothing of His personal character except in so far as was necessary for purposes of elucidation. For this there was an obvious reason, for no amount of personal excellence would have counterbalanced a defect in theory. It was not enough to show that Christ was unswervingly

loyal to His own principles so long as it was possible that those principles might in themselves have been mistaken. But now that the first part of our inquiry is concluded it is right to dwell on what, from another point of view, might well have come first—the nature of His own personality and the quality of His influence.

The best testimony is in one sense indirect, for it lies in the amazing unanimity of those who for 1900 years have had any real experience of the spiritual life. They agree in regarding Christ as a spiritual genius of the very highest order and have found in His deepest utterances, such for instance as the Beatitudes or His teaching about prayer, words of ultimate wisdom. Psychologists, who use by profession a language very different from His, have yet recognised in Him a master of their craft, and the saints who do use His language have found it adequate to guide and to express their deepest convictions. For as astonishing as His insight into the human heart is His power to crystallise spiritual truth into a phrase, and these phrases of His have fed and nourished the spiritual lives of the best men and women throughout the centuries. They cry with one voice "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."[1] It is perhaps enough to say that His personality enabled or compelled Him to say that though heaven and earth should pass away His words would not pass away, and that the subsequent experience of the world, so far from proving this amazing claim to be false, has in every century borne witness to its truth.

But it is not necessary to limit ourselves to the testimony of "spiritual experts", though no sane criticism will neglect their evidence: we appeal to the common experience of mankind.

[1] John vi, 68.

And here the difficulty lies deeper, for no words are adequate for the purpose, and inadequate words may well be worse than useless. But indeed the attempt is needless for, on such a point, if on any, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*. The power of Christ's personality to win allegiance has been attested in every century, in every country, and by every type of mankind. We begin with the half-conscious testimony of the evangelists who had at least heard from eye-witnesses of the power which lay in His lightest word. "Never man," they tell us, "spake like this man." And the Man whom they ignorantly worshipped has been declared to us as Master by every generation which has followed. The personality which broke down the pride of the rich Pharisee, which confounded the frivolous Herod and weary or jesting Pilate, which gave new life to the woman who was a sinner and exalted the humble Zacchæus, has spoken to men and women like them through all the centuries that have passed. Poets, philosophers, soldiers and princes, rich men and beggars, saints and sinners, have found in Him the answer to their need. No other of the world's great men has a following which in catholicity approaches His : no one else has made an equal appeal to the mystic and the man of affairs, to the statesman and the thinker. Oscar Wilde in Reading Gaol, St. Louis on his throne, St. Francis on the hills about Assisi : Dante and Bernard Shaw : Wilberforce and Thomas à Kempis, Gandhi and Gladstone—the list is endless and the variety inconceivable. At times when the light burns lowest, as in England in the eighteenth century or in Italy at the Renaissance, the cry "Back to Christ" has never failed of a response, and Wesley or Savonarola proves once more the power of His name. To Him all roads converge, for in Him all human aspiration finds its fulfilment, and the

call is ever the same, to explore the hidden riches of His personality. Ecce Homo ! cries a Cambridge professor, while an American man of business calls his compatriots to discover the Man whom Nobody Knows. From every continent to-day, as in every century of past history in Europe, the same cry goes up, for there is no real hope for humanity except in the loyal attempt to understand and to follow Him in Whom as St. Paul found nineteen hundred years ago "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden ".[1]

(*f*) *Christ's claims for Himself*

The Christian world has formed a very definite opinion of Christ, and has accepted the view of His nature which His disciples came to hold by the slow process recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. It is a perfectly fair question to ask whether it is the view which Christ held Himself, or, in other words, whether He made Himself the claims to Divinity which have been, and are, put forward in His name.

To those who accept the general accuracy of the Gospel of St. John the question admits of only one answer, but though, as has been said, to reject its evidence as negligible is unscientific, it would be equally wrong to rest the case mainly upon it. We should begin by asking what picture of Christ's own attitude can be drawn from the unchallenged evidence of the Synoptic Gospels.

We have already seen that any definite claim on His part to be "God" would have been meaningless, until there was some clear conception of God's nature to which He could appeal, and that His first task was to give that conception, building on the foundation well and truly

[1] Col. ii, 3.

laid by the great Hebrew prophets. We need not look for, and we shall not find, a clear-cut statement of His relationship to God. The efforts of theologians since His day have failed to provide it, and indeed it is very likely beyond the reach of human language: it was certainly incapable of expression in terms comprehensible to those who first followed Him. It will remain a legitimate subject of reverent doubt how far Christ was Himself capable of giving it expression, for the language of psychology, in which, if at all, such expression can be found was as alien to Him as that of any other science. What we do know is that all His words and all His actions show a complete confidence in His unity with God the Father. Some words (not His own) tell us that it was necessary for Him to "learn obedience":[1] His own words show how completely the lesson of surrender was learnt. When He said "Not my will but thine be done" He achieved the only triumph which we know Him to have needed to win. We are permitted to see that there was a struggle, to realise that "we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities": and to know that it was "through suffering" that "the Captain of our Salvation was made perfect".[2]

Further than this into the ultimate mystery of Christ's personality, that is in what way He was "perfect God and perfect man", we are not permitted to see, and the fact will not unduly perturb us, when we remember how little we ultimately know of any human personality, including our own: but we can look with freedom and certainty on the words in which He revealed the power which His personality gave, and from them we must draw our own conclusions. It is indisputable, indeed it was the first

[1] Heb. v, 8. [2] Heb. iv, 15; ii, 10.

thing which struck every observer, that Christ spoke "with authority", but we often forget how absolute was the authority which He claimed. He forgave sins, not as a priest by the authority of Another, but in His own right and on His own initiative: He set Himself up definitely as having a higher authority than the Law of the Jews, which was to them in very truth Divine. "It was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you." He set the following of Himself above the ordinary duties of humanity, so that a man must leave father and mother for His sake. He claimed to judge the world.

It would be legitimate to interpret these sayings as the the raving of a monomaniac, an egoist greater than any the world has seen, if it were not for the constant and irresistible evidence to His humility which inspires the whole record. The paradox finds its final expression in that tremendous saying recorded by St. Matthew which goes far to explain and to corroborate much that we find in St. John. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."[1]

Aut deus aut homo non bonus—the alternative remains, for those who have the courage to force it: the one thing which is not permissible is to regard Christ as an ordinary "good" man with an ethical teaching curiously in advance of His age.

(*g*) *The claims made in His name*

But we ought not to confine ourselves to Christ's actual expressions, unless we are prepared to believe that the impression which He undoubtedly made upon His

[1] Matt. xi, 29.

followers was one which He did not intend—and the assumption would be a strange one in the case of a teacher of such lucidity. They unmistakably received an impression of mystery, and regarded Him not only with devotion and loyalty but with a reverent awe : they felt in Him the presence of a " holiness " which made Him seem in a true sense divine, though they had not the time to think out the implications of the word while He was still with them.

The Acts shows how the conviction of His Divinity, implicit before, became explicit after the Resurrection, and St. Paul's epistles are based on his own spiritual experience of an intimate personal relationship with the Ascended Christ. St. John in a later generation shows how prolonged meditation on the facts as known to him led him to the doctrine developed in the prologue to his Gospel, which sums up the accepted Christian doctrine.

The progress of Christian thought recorded in this brief summary *may* no doubt have been in the wrong direction, but Christians will assert that the more the Synoptic Gospels are studied the more inevitable does it appear : in other words, a careful reading of their narrative shows that something more is needed to explain it, and this St. John's Gospel supplies. They are entitled to point to the hold which the belief in Christ's Divinity has steadily maintained over His followers, for, though much of it may be readily discounted as superficial, there remains a vast amount of spiritual experience in all ages to confirm it. The Synoptic Christ who said " Lo I am with you all the days even unto the end of the world " has fulfilled His promise.

Our language fails to present the mystery adequately, but we find in one of the phrases of the Nicene Creed a metaphor which serves at any rate to guide our thoughts

aright. The sun is in heaven, but there shines on earth as much of its light as earth can bear: Christ, Light of Light, *lumen de lumine*, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, shows to us all of the Godhead that a human life could show, and is, in doing so, as truly divine as the sunlight which reaches us is really and truly the light of the heavenly sun. The millions of miles through which the sunlight passes before it can reach us give not a wholly inadequate image of the difference in conditions which separates the life begun in the manger of Bethlehem from that lived with the Father before the world began.

CHAPTER III

THE OBSTACLES TO THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

(*a*) *Intellectual*

THERE is the picture, drawn, so far as a Christian may draw it, without theological prejudice. It is inevitable that the effect which it makes on those who look at it should vary according to the presuppositions which they bring with them. If a man has definitely come to the conclusion that to believe in any God at all is a folly, or if he has deliberately decided that the God who exists is weak, foolish or bad, the message of Christ can have no meaning for him : but if he accepts the belief, for which good reason has been shown, that there is behind creation a personal and loving power he can hardly refuse to believe that Christ is what St. Paul called Him " the image of the invisible God "[1]—that He showed on earth all of divinity that can be shown in the conditions of one human life, more than His own people could understand, more than has yet been fully grasped by all the generations that have followed. And this seems to me to be elementary Christianity.

That it is elementary only is obvious, but there is no need to stop there : indeed it is very difficult to stop. Anyone who has come thus far will look with a new eye on the stories which he has hitherto regarded with distrust as threatening to break down by force the opposition

[1] Col. i, 15.

of his reason. He will ask himself what limits he is prepared to place to the powers of One in whom the divine power was so manifestly revealed. He will consider without prejudice whether so unique a life does not suggest, even if it cannot be said to demand, a unique entry on to the field of human existence, and, when he comes to consider the evidence for the Resurrection, he may well feel that the words of St. Peter gave the only true and adequate account, when he said that "God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."[1]

In this part of his inquiry he is not limited to the Gospel record: he has before him the history of the belief in Christ and its effect on countless Christian lives: he has the lives of the saints in their infinite variety and the records of the mystics in their impressive agreement; he has to remind himself that these are facts of history as definite as facts of science, and calling for explanation by anyone who wishes to see life steadily and whole.

Finally, he is not left to any external record: he can, if he will, verify in his own person the truths which he is asked to accept: he may prove for himself

> the power of prayer
> To strengthen faith and sweeten care

and, as he prays, in humble imitation of the Master whom he reverences, if not in obedience to the Lord he serves, there may for a moment come to him one of those visions of truth which make argument needless, and some of those certainties which make it impertinent.

"I give you," we may say to such a seeker,

> I give you a thread of gold in your hand,
> Only wind it into a ball;
> 'Twill bring you in at Heaven's gate,
> Built in Jerusalem's wall.

[1] Acts ii. 24.

If there are, as can hardly be doubted, very many of those with whom we have to do whose Christianity is elementary in the sense in which we have defined the term, it remains to be considered what is our duty towards them. That duty may be defined as the removal of stumbling blocks, and these stumbling blocks may be classified as intellectual and moral.

First among the intellectual stumbling blocks which it is our duty to remove I should put those caused by our official adherence to a geocentric view of the universe. So long as we seem to maintain a position which science has shown to be mistaken, we cannot expect a hearing from those to whom the inconceivable vastness of the universe undoubtedly seems at first sight to render incredible the doctrine on which Christianity has been held to rest, the doctrine, that is, of the infinite value of the individual soul, as it undoubtedly shatters the framework of what we may call Christian geography. It is true that the discovery is no new one, but dates back to the age of Copernicus and Galileo, but it is also true, as Dean Inge has recently observed, that " the task (of considering the new situation thus created) has been put off from generation to generation, and to this day little has been done to relieve the strain upon the intellect and conscience of the Christian world." It is impossible to deny the truth of his statement of the position. " The discovery that the earth, instead of being the centre of a finite universe, like a dish with a dish-cover above it, is a planet revolving round the sun, which itself is only one of millions of stars, tore into shreds the Christian map of the universe. Until that time the ordinary man, whether educated or uneducated, had pictured the sum of things as a three-storeyed building, consisting of heaven, the abode of God, the angels, and beatified spirits ; our earth ; and the infernal regions,

where the devil, his angels, and lost souls are imprisoned and tormented. The mystics had been allowed to hold and expound a more spiritual philosophy ; there was never, I believe, a time when the saying that God has His centre everywhere and His circumference nowhere was condemned as unorthodox. But most certainly heaven and hell were geographical expressions." For my own part I feel it impossible to resist his conclusion that all theological doctrines which rest upon the geocentric theory must be recast.

> Those who feel alarmed at the suggestion would do well to read the passage in which Bishop Gore combats " the argument that the abandonment of what is called the ' three-storeyed ' view of the universe involves the abandonment of certain articles of the Creed." It is difficult to resist his conclusion that " we are tied to a prescientific relativity in our ordinary language about the world because our experience is tied to it."[1] But the ordinary man does not (to his great loss) always read Bishop Gore.

It is absurd to regard this view as in itself heretical, just as it is absurd to attach any blame to those who in an earlier day expressed their beliefs in the language of their own time. Much of the work has indeed been already accomplished by laymen for themselves, and it is time that they should no longer be left without the support of ecclesiastical authority. No sane man believes that heaven is " up there ", and as for hell, it is four hundred years since Marlowe showed us that it lies in the heart. There is little to be added to those terrible lines in which Mephistopheles replies to Faustus' question :

[1] *Can We Then Believe?* p. 206.

Faust. Where are you damn'd ?
Meph. In hell.
Faust. How comes it, then, that thou are out of hell ?
Meph. Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.
Thinks't thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
In being deprived of everlasting bliss ?

To remove geocentric doctrines from the Creed, or, rather, to explain them officially in non-geocentric language should not be difficult, and is a reform overdue. It is intolerable that if, as I believe, the descent into hell means nothing more than that Christ was really and truly dead, an ambiguous word should be allowed to remain a stumbling block to the literal minded.

I am not wishing to disparage, or to deny the beauty of, the doctrines of the Harrowing of Hell, nor of the Preaching to the Spirits in Prison, which are clearly independent of any local association, or, rather, can clearly be so stated.

We should frankly admit that as regards the universe as a whole our ignorance is profound : the plurality of worlds is a possiblity which is well worth discussing, but it is not a religious question. The religious view of the matter is summed up in the lines

For God has other Words for other worlds
But for this world the Word of God is Christ.

To the minor argument, that it is in the highest degree improbable that a tiny people in an obscure land received a message affecting the eternal welfare of countless generations, we shall answer, first, that we live in a very " improbable " world, from whatever angle we approach it, and that it is a great mistake to regard life as a

comparatively simple thing into which the insoluble problem of religion is wantonly introduced : and next, that the very natural belief that great results must come from large places is one which history clearly refutes. It is indisputable, so far as the Western world is concerned, that our knowledge of what is beautiful comes in the main from a small Greek town and from half a dozen smaller still in Italy, so that it is not in itself surprising that religion should come to us from a Jewish village. Ideas, we shall remind the critic, are the things which really influence the life of the world, and it is obviously as easy for a great idea to be born in a village as in a city, in a stable as in a palace.

Nor must it ever be forgotten that the Jews were as truly specialists in religion as the Greeks in Art or the Romans in law. The fact that the New Testament has superseded the Old must not be allowed to blind us to the fact that the Jews in the time of the second Isaiah had reached truths about God which we still hold as vital. The Psalms, the ordinary Jewish hymn book, still represent to us some of the highest expressions of our thoughts about God and man. The mere idea of using any similar volume of Greek or Roman religious poetry as part of our daily worship is ridiculous, and should suffice to remind us of the supreme religious genius of the Jew.

" The whole religious and moral sentiment of the most advanced nations of the world has been mainly determined by the influence of that small nation which inhabited Palestine."[1] It is no more " improbable " that religion should have come to flower in one nation alone than that in the world of nature out of every fifty million seeds capable of life only one should, in fact, survive.

[1] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, I. 17.

The second intellectual difficulty which we should do well to remove arises from the obsolete formularies in which some of our creed is sometimes presented. It is not too much to say that the presence of the Thirty-nine Articles in the Prayer Book is to many would-be Christians a standing proof, if not of intellectual dishonesty, at least of a curious indifference to truth.

Those who are acquainted with their origin will see plenty of reason to be grateful for having been saved from the extreme views with which they attempted, not unsuccessfully, to compromise, and will understand why it is easy to drive a coach and four through their intentional ambiguities : but the practice is demoralising to those who do it and in a high degree unedifying to spectators. The Thirty-nine Articles do not, in spirit or in letter, represent the beliefs we hold, and it is difficult to believe that Parliament would resist a demand on our part to be allowed to restate what we believe. And if it did, even disestablishment, with all its attendant evils, would be a cheap price to pay for intellectual honesty.

Again, it is inexcusable that we have so long acquiesced in the provision that the Athanasian Creed should be recited at those festivals which are attended by the largest and least instructed congregations. It is true that the provision is disregarded, and that the revised Prayer Book removes it, but even so there is real need for the truths which it contains to be disentangled from its errors, and for the interpretation not unnaturally put upon it by simple-minded persons to be officially disowned.

Every instructed Christian knows that the hymn in question is neither a creed nor by Athanasius. As it is usually condemned for its passion for explanation and for its lack of charity to unbelievers, it is worth while to

add that its length is due to its persistent refusal to explain what it does not understand, and that it definitely states that men are to be judged by their works. All the same, it is ideally unsuitable to be recited by ignorant congregations at great festivals: the Roman Church wisely confines it to Prime, a service which only well-instructed Christians will probably attend.

What we need to be told is that its doctrinal statements are expressed in terms of the philosophy of the time and that that philosophy is not to-day accepted. The terms "Person" and "Substance" have lost their meaning for us, because we do not habitually think in terms of "substance" at all, and use the word "person" in a sense completely different from that of the Athanasian philosophy. It would be a great gain if we could realise that "there is no official explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity." It is a phrase enshrining a mystery—and there is no harm in our confessing that we cannot "explain" the nature of God. We believe it to involve a personality richer and deeper than anything we can conceive, but the problem of stating it, so far as it can ever be stated, is one for the infant science of psychology rather than for philosophy. Till that statement is reached a Christian may content himself with a belief such as St. Paul had reached when he spoke of "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost."

It is equally necessary to declare that if the writer of the Athanasian hymn believed, as he probably did, in the inevitable damnation of the heathen, he was as little representative of the mind of Christ, or of the belief of Christians of the present day. If Dante could not feel it possible to admit Virgil even into Purgatory (though he could by a pathetic breach of consistency find room

in Paradise for one of the creatures of his brain[1]) there is little reason for surprise if an earlier Christian held that Socrates was damned. It would be nearer to Christian verity to declare frankly that he, like Praxiteles, was inspired, if Truth and Beauty are indeed divine, though it would always remain legitimate to debate the value or the degree of their inspiration. If "the rain from heaven and fruitful seasons" which filled the hearts of men "with food and gladness" in pre-Christian days were a proof that God had "not left himself without witness" the same may surely be said of the great men of early days, who filled their minds with wisdom and their eyes with delight.

A similar assurance could, and should, be given with regard to the doctrine of the Atonement. It is true that no attempt is made in our Creeds to lay down the nature of the work which Christ wrought for us in His life and death, but this fact is very generally forgotten, and Christians are credited in popular thought with the crude belief which Milton did so much to popularise. It might have been thought that no Christian doctrine was more certain than that of the unchangeable goodness of God, but it is hardly too much to say that most people regard Christians as believing that Christ's death changed a purpose of undeserved wrath into one of promiscuous benevolence. We have, and claim, no right to say more than that Jesus Christ "for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven—was made man—and was crucified." The widest liberty of speculation may be, and is, allowed upon this theme: the one thing which is inadmissible is to say that the purposes of God can change.

[1] Rhipeus is in Purgatory because called by Virgil justissimus unus qui fuit in Teucris. Par: XX, 68.

There are some minor interpretations or rectifications of our formulæ which are required. Some, it may be hoped, a revised Prayer Book will soon give us : it is, for instance, intolerable that in the Baptismal service we should be bidden to declare our belief in the resurrection of the flesh—an entirely heretical doctrine. The resurrection of the body is a phrase dictated not by a belief that its structure will be preserved, which is demonstrably impossible, but by the feeling that no other word would safeguard that possibility of recognition in another life without which resurrection would mean so little. The glorified body of Christ is not represented as identical with the body which was buried in the tomb, and St. Paul's great paradox of the "spiritual body" laid down the lines of Christian thought.

The notion of a material identity between the present and the future bodies is one which calls for more emphatic repudiation than it has yet received.

Again, it is impossible to doubt that the un-Christian view of death which pervades the burial service does much to encourage the doubt whether we really believe what we say. That service was not composed by or for people who felt sure that the victory over death was won. If we believe that it is inconceivable either that a Father should let his child perish, or that in a world made by a just and good God a loving personality should be extinguished, we ought to find the means of saying so, and the Gospels would furnish us with the words we need.

Similarly, it is impossible not to regret that our belief in "the life of the world to come" is allowed to be represented by hymns, mainly translations, which represent it as one of continued adoration. We need to be officially reminded that such a heaven would hardly satisfy the God whom Christ preached any more than it

satisfies the natural longings of the creatures whom He has made.

The ordinary man needs to be told in what sense he is expected to believe in the Church. It is obvious that such belief may be "high" or "low", in the sense in which two equally loyal subjects of a King may take a "high" or "low" view of his prerogative. There are some to whom Christ's abstention from emphasis on the subject will seem to remove it from the sphere of fundamental doctrine: there are others to whom the rapid growth of its organisation and the continuity of its history seem a guarantee of its divine origin. Neither party has the right to excommunicate the other. A Christian, as such, is committed to the belief that Christ founded a divine society of which His apostles were the first members, and if he reads the Epistle to the Ephesians he will, perhaps for the first time, realise the full glory of the conception of a Catholic Church in which all men are admitted to "the fellowship of the mystery", and all, Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor, rank as "fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." No one who has seen the beauty of that vision, and works for its fulfilment, need fear the reproach that he is not a "good catholic."

It will seem to many ridiculous to leave the Sacraments to be dealt with in a single paragraph, and so it would be were the attempt being made to discuss the place of Sacramentalism in religion, or to estimate the place which it can rightly hold in Christian life. Our object is the more modest one of maintaining that here too there is room for a wide difference of belief among Christians. All must hold that in the Communion Christ is "really" present, and those who compare our Prayer Book with the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI will understand

how carefully and wisely that word was chosen to mean precisely what it says. Nor may we doubt that "inward and spiritual graces" are conveyed by "outward and visible signs"—a thing indeed which no lover and no poet would dream of questioning.

But here again it must be repeated that there is no one orthodox doctrine. Those who have found the Sacrament, in its widest extension, of supreme spiritual value are right, and indeed are bound, to testify what they do know: but they should bear in mind the caution of Hooker to those who "having eagle's wings are offended that others do fly so near the ground." Those who ask whether Christ is not "really present" in all honest Christian prayer may perhaps be thought to interpret Sacramentalism in at least as wide a sense. Both parties to this controversy should read, and re-read, that passage in Edward VI's First Prayer Book in which they are bidden "in all thinges to folowe and kepe the rule of charitie, and every man to be satisfied with his owne conscience, not judging other mennes myndes or consciences; where as he hath no warrant of Goddes word to the same."

(*b*) *Moral*

But we can never afford to forget that the real objection to Christianity is not primarily intellectual, but moral; the objection that Christians are not, in fact, good enough to make it worth while to join them; and this is an objection which we are seldom ready to face either as individuals or as a Church. It is true, no doubt, that much of the criticism levelled at the Church is grossly unfair. When it invites men to concentrate on the things of the spirit it is sneered at for preaching "other worldliness", and for being culpably out of touch with the life

of its time : when it attempts to show how Christianity should be worked out in practice, it is fiercely warned off the political sphere, and urged to mind the business which is really its own. It is criticised for its attention to ceremonial, and bitterly blamed (though mainly within its own ranks) when that ceremonial is either excessive or defective. It is grudged the power to set its own house in order, and continually taunted with its ramshackle condition. The popular criticism of the life, beliefs and work of a parish priest or of a Bishop is almost inconceivably out of touch with reality.

This is very hard to bear for those who know the incredible difficulties, financial and otherwise, under which the official work of the Church is now being done, and realise either that there never has been a time when so much unselfish labour was being put into its task, or that there is no good work at present being carried on in England which does not owe much of its inspiration and success to men consciously inspired with the Christian spirit.

But all this, true as it is, is not for official Christians to say, for the law of humility must surely apply to institutions as to individuals : they may console themselves with the thought that their reputation suffers for the sins of the past, and that they pay for the intellectual and moral slovenliness of the centuries which followed the Restoration, but they have no right to expect other people to forget their record. If they are now "doing good and suffering for it" they may expect the blessing which comes to those who bear such injustice patiently, but their first task must be not to deprecate criticism but to show in action that it is undeserved.

And surely it is Christians who should be the first to maintain that as a Church they have failed, and are

failing utterly, to show forth to the world that glorious example of an unselfish and loving society of which their Master drew the outlines and His followers, St. Paul and St. John, filled in the detail. It is not for them to complain that they are judged by too high a standard, for no standard should be higher than that which they set for themselves. They have to reflect with shame that the word ecclesiastical suggests an exclusiveness out of all relation to the glorious conception of St. Paul, that the word Catholic suggests not a world-wide hope but a party label, that no "Church party" has ever existed in political life except to secure some of the privileges and rewards which as Christians they are sworn to despise.

Here is the hard fact. We stand before the world as disciples of a Master whose message to the world was love, a message delivered in the name of a God in whose sight whosoever liveth without charity is counted dead: and the world regards us as a small society which believes that the road to heaven is in its private and particular keeping. Can there be any doubt that this is because neither as individuals nor as a body we "put the first things first"?

Let us listen to the words of the one Bishop of recent days whom all who knew him would regard as having real claims to saintliness—Bishop King of Lincoln:

"The old way of simple Christian brotherhood seems to me still to be the way. People get influenced by the world and selfish, and proud, and idle, and there are also so many bad people that one is apt to become suspicious, and disbelieve in people, and so to treat them with a kind of hard reserve. But that is no good; a full dis-interested love always ready to help, always longing to help most in spiritual things. This is what is wanted to raise people

from the sour, unbelieving, materialistic thoughts, which the rough struggle of life too often produces."[1]

Or again briefly :

"You must not over-worry yourself about your advance in the Christian life. It is very simple—*the love of God* and *love of man*. That is perfection !"

Or, more briefly still :

"Love is the golden thread which God wants us to use. It will draw us to Himself and to each other."

This is the sort of evidence for which the world is waiting, and it is an evidence which each of us has it in his power to supply. We may neglect the needs of the "purely evidential man", who is like a person "for ever studying Bradshaw but never making a start" : our arguments will not convince him, but our lives may, and in the attempt to live such a life we shall find the evidence and the conviction which we need ourselves. Let us listen to Bishop King once more, and we shall understand something of the simplicity and the power with which he carried out his purpose "to prove, if it please God, in my own life that the Gospels are true."

"I still go on in my simple superficial way, loving flowers, and birds, and the sunlight on the apples, and the sunset, and like to think more and more of the verse 'With Thee is the well of life, and in Thy light shall we see light.' And so again : 'Thou openest Thine hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness.' The flowers and the birds, and angels and men, all things that are ! !

"I feel more and more how utterly superficial one's knowledge is, but it seems, D.G., to be in the right direction, and to be more and more attractive, and I hope,

[1] Bishop King's *Spiritual Letters* (Mowbrays), pp. 23, 142, 176, 182.

please God, is leading one nearer to the One Beginning and End of all."

No one can fail to appreciate the attractive power of such a life, and there are few indeed who do not need to ask themselves why it is so different from their own. The simple answer is that he was prepared to take literally the Apostle's words about "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ",[1] and that he was anxious to live in Christ's continual presence, as most of us are not. For him this presence was mediated through the Church Christ founded and the Sacraments He instituted, but he never forgot that while we are bound by God's ordinances He is not so bound, nor that the purpose for which the Church existed was greater than itself.

If we live, or endeavour to live, as in the presence of Christ we cannot but wish to bring His spirit to bear on the society in which we live, and in so far as we are successful we shall be commending our Master's teaching in His own way. No words are necessary to emphasise the immensity of the undertaking, for modern society is based on an unacknowledged creed with which no Christian can be prepared to make terms,—"the creed that the individual is absolute master of his own, and, within the limits set by positive law, may exploit it with a single eye to his pecuniary advantage, unrestrained by any obligation to postpone his own profit to the well-being of his neighbours, or to give account of his actions to a higher authority."[2] If this belief is not, as it has been called, "the theory of property accepted by all civilised communities", it is at least extremely prevalent, and it

[1] II Cor. x, 5.

[2] Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 146.

runs demonstrably counter to every word of Christ's social teaching. We must combat it in the name not of any particular economic theory but of elementary Christian morality.

If we are to attempt, as we are bound to do, to bring the spirit of Christ into society, industry or politics we need to be very sure that we possess that spirit ourselves. Bucer was unquestionably preaching a true and much-forgotten Christian doctrine when he wrote that " neither the Church of Christ, nor a Christian Commonwealth, ought to tolerate such as prefer private gain to the public weal, or seek it to the hurt of their neighbours " ; there is enough material in this text to occupy the pulpits for a generation : but a Christian preacher can claim no infallibility for his conclusions as to what private gain is injurious to the public weal, nor for the amount of " hurt " which any particular search for it involves. If it were once accepted as a fundamental Christian principle that all we have is ours to be used for others, the love which Christians bear for other men would once again be a compelling evidence to the outside world, and selfishness in industry would yield, as slavery did, before the awakened conscience of mankind.

It is often assumed that some controversies are suitable for Christian participation and others are not, but it is usually forgotten that a Christian's most important share in any controversy is to see that it is conducted on Christian lines. Many of the greatest successes of Christian controversialists have been very dearly purchased.

To many the most pressing controversy of the present day seems to be that between the Rich and the Poor, but it is of the first importance to remember that Christ knows nothing of such a controversy. For Him rich and

poor are brothers, equally entitled to sympathy and equally in need of it. It is entirely Christian to feel for the manifold sorrows of the unfortunate, and their "infinite importance" in the sight of God is in far greater danger of being forgotten, but much that is said on their behalf is vitiated by the suspicion that their champions have forgotten to be sorry for their oppressors. Unless we really feel, and are sure that we feel, that a coalowner, if unrighteous, is more to be pitied than a coalminer, if underpaid, our championship of the latter is not really Christian, because we have accepted the fundamentally un-Christian belief that it is worse to be poor than to be selfish. It is better to sympathise with the oppressed than the oppressor, and very many of us have not reached even that stage, but it is not the whole of Christianity.

The most fundamental difference, it has been said, between mediæval and modern economic thought consists in the fact that, "whereas the latter normally refers to economic expediency, however it may be interpreted, for the justification of any particular action, policy or system, the former starts from the position that there is a moral authority to which considerations of economic expediency must be subordinated."[1] The first economic task of a Christian must be to labour for the principle that this moral authority can only be that of Christ, but this is only part of his general contention that "The perfect happiness of man" (whatever his station in life) "cannot be other than the vision of the divine essence."[2]

Our attempts fail because they have not a secure enough background of Christian practice in everyday life. It is little use to assert "the moral authority" of

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[2] Aquinas, quoted by Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Christ in industry unless our own private lives are demonstrably subject to that authority. There are comparatively few whose duty it is to suggest the lines on which Christian principles should be applied to the business of others : there are none who are exempt from an attempt to apply them to their own. It is quite possible that Christ would have thought that the motes in our own eye called for our attention before even the beams in the eyes of others.

At any rate it is certain that, so long as there is no sort of certainty that Christians will prove in every-day life better husbands and wives, better brothers and sisters, better friends, employers or servants than their neighbours, so long we are quite definitely failing to make the appeal which Christ and those who came closest to His thought definitely expected the Church to make. The Church—His body—is paralysed because of feet that will not walk, hands that will not work, and eyes that are shut to the glorious possibilities which He came on earth to reveal.

Many people are disposed to throw on the Church as an institution the blame that is really their own, and instead of trying to improve it persuade themselves that it should never have existed. It is therefore necessary to say plainly that " undenominational Christianity ", as distinguished from the closest co-operation in good works between different denominations, is either a beautiful but elusive dream or a nightmare. It is inevitable that human beings should form themselves into societies to advocate causes in which they believe, and clear that they gain greatly in character by the efforts at self-suppression needed to maintain such societies in existence. Such societies must have a definite basis, which must be the truth as they see it. A definite allegiance to a particular

body need involve no desire to " unchurch " other bodies nor to deny the " validity " of their ministrations. As against the outside world, so against other Christian bodies, the one valid argument for a particular society is the argument of a Christ-like life, enjoined on its members and consciously aspired to by them. To say that because Quakers (for example) have often been the best Christians therefore Quakerism is the ideal form of religion is obviously not a good argument, but in the attempt to reunite Christendom no society can hope to succeed which cannot claim to use a similar argument in its own support.

If the prophet had bidden us do some great thing we feel we might have done it : and so we wait for the great opportunity : and all the time and every day there lies before us the tremendous possibility of a mission which exceeds in glory all that the earth has to show, the position of being in a true sense Ambassadors of Christ, the duty of so ordering our lives as to prove (if it please God) in our own persons that the Gospel of Christ is true.

A Christian believes that such a life can only be fully lived in communion with God and by the help of His Holy Spirit, granted in answer to prayer. We have seen that it is no insult to a Divine Father, any more than to those earthly parents whose fatherhood takes its name from His, to suppose that He desires to be asked for the good things which He is ready to give—and of all good things which He can bestow this is the greatest. In His Spirit and by His help we can fashion our lives according to the pattern which Christ showed us once and for all, and realise in our own small lives, and the societies in which they are passed, something of the glory of that picture which St. Paul drew for the Ephesians, in words

in which the fullness of the Christian faith and the Christian hope shines through the most practical and simple of exhortations.

"Wherefore" (because ye have been taught "the truth as it is in Jesus"), "putting away lying, speak every man truth unto his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye followers of God as dear children: and walk in love, even as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us."

This may be, and indeed is, "elementary Christianity" but it is not far from the Kingdom of God.

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